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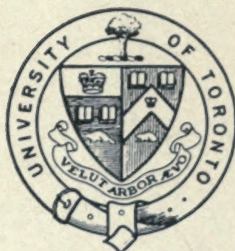
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IMPERIAL DEFENCE AND  
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*Photo by Elliott & Fry.*

The Rt. Hon. Sir JOHN COLOMB, K.C.M.G.

(M.P. FOR BOW & BROMLEY, 1886-1892,  
AND FOR GREAT YARMOUTH, 1895-1905.)



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# IMPERIAL DEFENCE AND CLOSER UNION

*Brig.  
C  
(Colomb)*

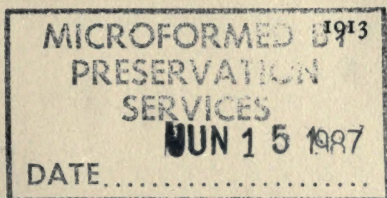
A short record of the life-work of the late  
SIR JOHN COLOMB,  
in connection with the movement towards  
Imperial Organisation

By  
HOWARD D'EGVILLE

With a Preface by  
COL. THE RIGHT HON. J. E. B. SEELY, D.S.O., M.P.  
(SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR)

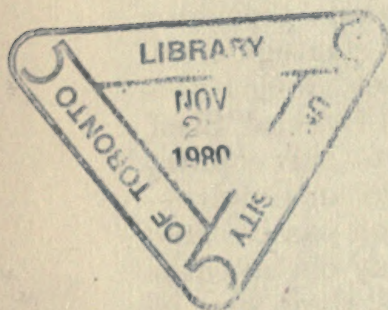
And  
an Introduction by  
REAR-ADMIRAL SIR CHARLES L. OTTLEY,  
K.C.M.G., C.B., M.V.O  
(LATELY SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE)

LONDON  
P. S. KING & SON  
ORCHARD HOUSE, WESTMINSTER



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*"The next ten or twenty years will be critical in the history of this Empire; they may even be decisive of its future. God grant that whether we be of these Mother Islands, or of the great Dominions beyond the seas, we may so bear ourselves that the future shall not hold to our lips the chalice of vain regret for opportunity neglected and dead."*—The Rt. Hon. R. L. Borden, at Dinner of Empire Parliamentary Association, at House of Commons, July 16, 1912.





## PREFACE

BY

COLONEL THE RT. HON. J. E. B. SEELY,  
D.S.O., M.P.

THIS book tells the story of a man whose political activities were devoted to a single end—Imperial Unity. Sir John Colomb convinced himself that the surest way to secure the union of the different parts of the Empire was to begin by concentrating on Imperial Defence. It can be truly said of him that he was a prescient man. It is not a little remarkable that long before Admiral Mahan wrote his book on the Influence of Sea Power, Sir John Colomb was preaching the doctrine of the immense strategical advantages of one Imperial Fleet; long before the creation of the Imperial General Staff, he was urging the dangers to this country—the island centre of so wide an Empire—of concentrating our efforts on passive land defence. Whatever view may be taken as to the soundness of his views, there can be no doubt that he foresaw clearly the lines

upon which the best naval and military thought would proceed.

It would be claiming too much to say that the general acceptance of these principles was due to Sir John Colomb's unaided efforts, but it must certainly be said that he contributed in no small degree to that end. In the House of Commons his vigilance on these subjects was unceasing. If he saw the least sign that passive land defence was to be exalted at the expense of naval power, woe betide the unfortunate Minister who wished to get his business through.

At the meetings of the Royal United Service Institution, the old Imperial Federation League (of which he was a founder), and later of the Imperial Co-operation League, he always insisted on the necessity of Sea Power, with striking power to reinforce it. To distinguished guests from the Dominions he would show courteous hospitality, but at the same time inform them, with the utmost frankness, that he conceived they were not doing enough for Imperial Defence. Nor did his guests ever take offence at the blunt statement of his views, for it was impossible not to admire and respect the man whose whole life was devoted to a single end, and whose unselfish devotion to the cause had done much to clear away the mists of uncertainty.



Mr. Howard d'Egville is well equipped for writing this book, not only from his close personal friendship with Sir John Colomb, but from his active association with him in the work of the Imperial Co-operation League, from which sprang the Empire Parliamentary Association. It is possible to hope that this record of Sir John Colomb's life may help all who read it to a closer study of the problems of Imperial Defence.

J. E. B. SEELY.







## AUTHOR'S NOTE

IN presenting this small volume to the public, a few words of prefatory explanation regarding its object and scope may perhaps be advisable, in order that the somewhat ambitious title of the book may not prepare its readers for a disappointment. It is hoped, therefore, in as few words as possible to make clear the very definite limitations which I set for myself when undertaking its compilation.

During the many years in which I was associated with the late Sir John Colomb, both as his Parliamentary Private Secretary and later, when Sir John Colomb left the House of Commons, as a co-worker in the cause of Imperial Co-operation for Defence, it was brought to my knowledge that there was a very general desire amongst Sir John Colomb's many friends and followers that he should undertake to write a history of the movement in which he had played so great a part. It was thought, too, that many of his earlier writings should be revised,



brought up to date and republished, as they would undoubtedly form an important contribution to such a history. In consequence of suggestions of this nature, Sir John Colomb, shortly before he died, consulted me as to the best method to adopt in order to give effect to the desire, and some preliminary investigation and preparation had actually been commenced when this last piece of work of "the pioneer of Imperial Defence" was unhappily cut short by death. While it was obviously impossible for anyone else to undertake a work on the somewhat elaborate and detailed scale contemplated by Sir John Colomb, and most of all impossible for one who like myself can claim no independent authority, yet it was thought by many that his work should be placed on record as an essential part of the history of the evolution of Imperial Defence. In the following pages I have endeavoured to do this in a manner which will be clear to those who have not hitherto given any special attention to the study of defence matters, and also, I am sanguine enough to hope, in a way that may not be wholly devoid of interest and utility to the serious student of naval and military affairs.

In such a small volume it has been necessary to avoid biographical details in the body of the book, which has relation



rather to the principles for which Sir John Colomb contended than to the circumstances of his own life. But in order that the reader may have some slight record of the main facts of his career I may state here that Sir John Colomb was a son of General George Thomas Colomb, and was born on 1st May, 1838. He was educated at the Royal Naval College, and entered the Royal Marine Artillery in 1854, retiring with the rank of Captain in 1869 in order to pursue an active campaign in furtherance of the objects he had so much at heart. His work on behalf of the larger principles of defence will be referred to from time to time in the course of the following pages, and the only other personal detail which may be allowed here is the fact of his marriage on 1st January, 1866, to Mrs. Paget (daughter of Mr. R. S. Palmer and widow of Lieutenant Charles Augustus Paget, R.N.), whose active sympathy and co-operation with her husband throughout his public life was to him a source of perpetual encouragement and inspiration.

The considerations which have prevented further reference to facts of personal history have likewise made it necessary to avoid technicalities, and to print only such private letters as might serve to illuminate some point dealt with in the text. Though it is be-

lieved that quotations are not given more frequently than is consistent with easy reading, principles have been enunciated, as far as possible, in the words of Sir John Colomb himself. The latter task has been rendered a little difficult of accomplishment on account of the scattered nature of his literary contributions, for though he was a fairly voluminous writer, he published very few books. It has, therefore, been necessary to make use of many lectures, speeches, pamphlets and Review articles, in order to present the reader with a connected story of the evolution of British Defence, in relation to the life-work of Sir John Colomb. But his actual literary output by no means represents the debt which the Empire owes to his efforts. I could not hope to put this view more cogently than was done by an able writer in the *Morning Post*, who, in a special article upon the work of Sir John Colomb which appeared at the time of his death, wrote:—

“A mere catalogue of his publications is not enough to do justice to the important part which, in conjunction with his famous brother, he bore in rousing and educating the public. As young men, they both saw the Government turning aside from the doctrine of sea-power in pursuit of a defensive Military policy; and they were im-



pressed, each in his different way, by the waste and weakness which passive defence, whether by fortifications or Volunteers, implied. It may be said truly of both of them that they were pioneers in preaching the doctrine which is nowadays inseparably connected with the name of Captain Mahan."

It would not be fitting to omit from these prefatory remarks a reference to the eminent career of Sir John Colomb's brother, Vice-Admiral P. H. Colomb. In his standard work upon *Naval Warfare*, and in many books and essays, Admiral Colomb emphasized the doctrines of which his brother was the original exponent. Indeed, so constantly were the two names before the public, that they were frequently confused, and Sir John was himself referred to more than once as "Admiral," though, in fact, he retired, as already mentioned, with the rank of Captain in the Royal Marine Artillery. But the two brothers were ever working together in the closest communication, and Admiral Colomb always acknowledged, in public and in private, how much he owed to the pioneer work of his younger brother. In his essay on Imperial Defence (written in 1889 and published in *Essays on Naval Defence*) Admiral Colomb wrote :---

"I may be pardoned, perhaps, for assign-

ing to my brother, Sir John Colomb, the leading part in laying down and continually differentiating the governing principles of Imperial Defence. He took up the study more than twenty years ago, at a time when it had not been touched; and in his first pamphlet, *The Protection of our Commerce, and Distribution of our War Forces Considered*, which was published in 1867, may be fairly said to have given the key-note to all subsequent discussions."

While I have sought in the following pages to meet the need of those who wished to have the views of Sir John Colomb on general principles of defence put before them in an easily accessible form, the necessity of bringing the story of Imperial Defence up to date has not been disregarded. So much of recent development—more especially in regard to Canadian Naval policy—has been in direct continuation of the work begun many years ago by Sir John Colomb, that the record of events connected with it finds a necessary place in this small volume, as does also the progress made at various Imperial Conferences. Moreover, as Sir John Colomb always considered that the problem of Imperial Representation lay at the root of closer union within the Empire for purposes of defence, Chapter V of the book is devoted to the

discussion of this important question in its latest phases. In this last chapter, therefore, the reader is, to a certain extent, taken away from the subject matter of the previous chapters, in order to review some aspects of the constitutional side of Imperial Organization, the consideration of which is now urgently demanded if any further progress is to be made towards closer union for defence.

But while the progress of thought both at home and oversea relating to co-operation for defence is touched upon in Chapters III and IV, Chapters I and II are devoted to the gradual emergence and tardy acceptance of principles of defence for the recognition of which Sir John Colomb so long laboured. At a time such as the present, when once again purely military ideas of British Defence, as expounded by eminent soldiers (who are not always as careful as their Naval colleagues in expressing views upon matters lying outside their province) are in some danger of gaining too great an ascendancy over the public mind, it may not be altogether inopportune to call attention to general principles as they were outlined by the man who first gave them modern expression; for as the eminent writer upon defence, Mr. Spenser Wilkinson, put it, when writing to Sir John Colomb shortly before his death:—



“As regards naval war and the sea aspects of any British war, those in this country whose language is the one I understand look to you as the man who first taught them that language,—*il maestro di color che sanno*,—as Dante said of an earlier pioneer.”

I cannot bring these preliminary observations to a close without a word of thanks to Colonel Seely, who, amidst his manifold and important duties as Secretary of State for War, has found time to write so appreciatively in the Preface to this book of Sir John Colomb's work for the Empire. This tribute from the head of the British Army will serve to illustrate how much military thought has benefited by the labours of the man who was at one time the most fearless of War Office critics ; while the observations from the pen of Admiral Sir Charles Ottley, which I also gratefully acknowledge, in the Introduction which precedes the text, will show how substantial is the debt which the Navy owes to Sir John Colomb's efforts. Indeed, I cannot refrain from adding this personal observation that when writing the book I had no idea that its modest attempt to elucidate general principles would be supported by so brilliant an essay as that which Sir Charles Ottley has written. His Introduction, coming as it

does from the pen of one who was not only head of the Naval Intelligence Department, but also Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, will lend weight and value to the practical ideals which it has been the object of this volume to set forth.

HOWARD D'EGVILLE.

*February, 1913.*





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## INTRODUCTION

BY

REAR-ADMIRAL SIR CHARLES L. OTTLEY.

THE large and increasing public which throughout the Empire is to-day occupied with the problems of a closer understanding between the Mother-Country and the Dominions on questions of defence will, I feel sure, welcome Mr. d'Egville's little book as one of the most useful contributions towards a solution of the outstanding difficulties that has yet been published. And, inasmuch as it is largely an appreciation of the services rendered by Sir John Colomb to the cause of Imperial Defence, it is but fitting that one of those who, at the Naval Intelligence Department and at the Committee of Imperial Defence, officially reaped the benefit of his labours should gratefully acknowledge their importance and value.

It is perfectly true, if hitherto perhaps not generally recognized, that to John Colomb



belongs in a large measure the credit of authorship of the great series of reforms in our defensive arrangements which culminated in 1904 in the creation, on its present basis, of the Imperial Defence Committee, with all its far-reaching consequences—consequences still to-day hardly beyond their inception, but which may conceivably be destined in some distant future to realize, by the agency of a beneficent *Pax Britannica*, brought about by an ever-widening circle of union between the English-speaking peoples, that dream of universal and lasting peace which in all ages has proved so attractive to mankind.

How far this latter splendid vision may have appealed to John Colomb's sober and serene intelligence we need not here pause to inquire, for it is certain that his logical mind cherished no delusions as to the near approach of the millennium. He saw clearly enough that the golden age was still far distant—no man was better able than he to draw correct inferences from the inexorable facts of the world in which we live. The present writer recalls a last conversation with him, held at the office of the Defence Committee in 1909, when, after explaining certain proposals which he had in mind for a closer defensive union between the Mother-Country and the Dominions, he turned for

a few moments to the fundamental question. Was there in reality any ground for the hope that the arbitration movement might develop into an effective and satisfactory substitute in international disputes for the crude and cruel arbitrament of war? It is indeed the master-problem for all high-minded men who adopt the profession of arms, and no excuse therefore can be needed for placing it in the forefront of the considerations which must be held in mind in assessing the value of the work done by John Colomb. Can arbitration replace war? It is the riddle of the Sphinx. Men strive to answer it with the unquestioning affirmative which their hearts, their hopes, their interests dictate. The past fifty years particularly have witnessed, side by side with the colossal increase of armaments, this growing revolt against the old barbaric law of force as the last remedy in the disputes of nations. But, simultaneously with the growth of that revolt, the same fifty years have witnessed their full share also of the sufferings and horrors of war. The abhorrent spectre will not be laid. The ruthless irony of battlefields, still red to-day, seems to give the lie to the aspirations of the peace societies. Hence the present need to inquire into the scope and limitations of arbitration as a substitute for war, since,

should it appear that reference to some International Tribunal might in all cases provide a satisfactory solution to the quarrels between nations, not merely does warlike preparation become superfluous, but any expenditure on armaments, except on the minor scale needed for police purposes, is manifestly unjustifiable.

On the writer's arrival at The Hague for the Peace Conference of 1907 he found the idea of arbitration much in the air, but it was difficult to escape the impression that it had reacted upon the matter-of-fact minds of some of the delegates with unfortunate consequences, sowing seeds of scepticism, and even unmerited suspicion, as to the good faith of those who professed allegiance to it. The explanation of this pessimistic attitude of mind towards the idea of arbitration was perhaps to be found in the fact that in no single case of the wars (then recent) in Cuba, in South Africa, or in the Far East, could any conceivable Arbitral Court have satisfactorily effected a peaceful settlement between the parties. The attractive and sincere counsels of that veteran pacifist, the late Mr. W. T. Stead (who was himself much in evidence as an unofficial but active propagandist at the Hague), to "always arbitrate before you fight," fell at the Hague upon the ears of Russian and Japanese delegates still



deafened by the roar of the guns at Tsu Shima. British delegates heard them, and reflected upon the part played by the drawn sword and the British Army in South Africa, by the undrawn sword and the British Fleet at sea in holding off the intervention of a jealous Europe; the delegates of Spain and the United States, if they considered Mr. Stead's advice, could only do so while recalling the deplorable struggle in Cuba.

Can it to-day be maintained that Japan could have been induced except by force, or the threat of force implied by armaments, to submit her quarrel with Russia to arbitration, and to abide by the result? Is it possible to imagine that Turkey would have been ready, without drawing sword, to acquiesce in the mandate of any tribunal which dictated the yielding of Tripoli to her enemy of yesterday, or of Adrianople to her foes of to-day? And, even supposing that such a Court could be constituted and invested with power to enforce its decrees, by what code of laws could the verdict have been given in any sense except as a decision in favour of the *status quo*? The existing text-books of International Law, whose doctrines must rule in such a Court, would have to be read backwards before anything they contained could be twisted into an approval of the handing over of her oversea dominions

from the lawful ownership of feeble Spain to the strong but aggressive guidance of the United States. By what conceivable legal process could the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by Italy and the Balkan States, or the incorporation of the South African Republics in the British Empire, have been upheld?

The present writer desires to express no opinion on those questions, some of them still undecided. But it is impossible to overlook the fact that those "illegal" actions are defended in impassioned language by many of the most respected publicists in Europe on the ground that, on the whole, and assessed by the higher unwritten law which has regard to the liberty, welfare and progress of mankind, each and all of these "lawless transactions" is capable of justification because the human race is the better for them, not the worse.

It must not be supposed that the value of the principle of arbitration is impugned because the principle is, as we have seen, plainly inapplicable in certain, and those the most dangerous, cases. In scores of lesser quarrels recourse has been had to arbitration, and its awards have been accepted without the loss of one jot of national honour or prestige. Still less is it fair to belittle the yeoman service rendered by successive Hague Con-

ferences to the cause of humanity by the codification of the laws of war and of neutrality. In all these matters we have lately witnessed real progress and large prospect of future gains. But, all this notwithstanding, in a last analysis, as Bacon long ago pointed out, the ability of a State to use force, the power to right wrongs and uphold claims if necessary by the sword is, and, in the light of the foregoing considerations, seems likely for the present to remain, not less essentially a condition for the greatness of kingdoms and estates than are the purely municipal and economic qualifications—a numerous and contented population, equal laws, a vigorous commerce, equitable taxation and the like.

Since, then, war seems destined for the present to be, as it has been from the immemorial past, a condition which may from time to time overtake the best of nations, it behoves a prudent people to prepare in peace time to make war effectively, and in such fashion as shall best conduce to the prospect of victory.

Herein lies the justification for the devotion of a life's career to the problems of defence, or, in other words, of war-like preparation; and if such preparation can no longer be dismissed—as Herbert Spencer might have dismissed it fifty years ago—as a mere deplorable diversion



of the vital energies of the race from purely industrial activities to the cultivation of its "teeth and claws," if it has at length come to be recognized that without a due regard for the efficiency of its "teeth and claws" the whole body politic of the modern State stands in jeopardy every hour, this changed outlook is in the British Empire largely due to the teaching of men such as John Colomb.

As Mr. d'Egville so clearly indicates in his opening chapters, there were at the date when Colomb entered upon public life scarcely any reasoned convictions amongst British statesmen on defence questions. It might, indeed, almost be said that such convictions as did exist were fundamentally erroneous. Soldiers and sailors alike seemed in the early sixties to have gone astray on first principles. So far as the writer is aware, the Admiralty at that date acquiesced without protest in the perverted strategical theories which prompted the building, at a huge cost, of the Palmerston Forts. Subsequent Sea Lords laid down ship after ship for coast defence in defiance of the fundamental purpose for which the British Fleet exists and of the strategic necessity which demands that its rôle must always be the offensive and its battle ground, not the British coast, but the open sea, if not the

coastline of its enemy. The War Office figured to itself terrific stealthy descents of legions of continental soldiery upon the defenceless shores of England, and prepared to meet that dire contingency not as Elizabethan England met it, on the sea, but by a system of hedgerow defence of the English shires.

It was under these circumstances that John Colomb broke his first lance for Imperial Defence by his maiden essay on *The Protection of Commerce and the Distribution of our War Forces Considered*. In it he emphasized the fundamental principles which, thanks largely to the pioneer work done by himself and his brother, Admiral P. H. Colomb, have since come to be accepted as governing our whole Imperial Defence system, namely, that the British Empire floats upon the British Navy, or, in other words, that that Empire only exists on the condition that in war time it is capable of holding command of the sea.

The long Iliad of his struggles in defence of this irrefragable axiom is well unfolded in the book before us. If his teaching can be summarized in a single sentence, it might be said that he stood for a sane consideration of all the factors in the problem of defence, and an assessment of each of them at their true worth and in their true relative pro-

portion. He saw the problem of Imperial Defence "steadily" and he saw it "whole." He had ever in mind the evolution of a systematic plan which should embrace, not merely the Mother-Country, but the remotest islands and most distant possessions of the Empire, and should co-ordinate every branch of national life in a great plan for the defence of the world-wide possessions of the British Crown.

His conception of the duties of the British Navy in war was, in consequence of his clear-cut convictions stated above, perfectly simple and explicit. The Fleet of Britain must command the maritime communications of the Empire throughout the world. Its strength must be proportionate to its colossal task. The organization and numbers of the British Army were, in Colomb's view to be based upon the postulate that our Navy was capable of fulfilling this fundamental duty. If, by some frightful mischance, the Navy should prove incapable of holding the sea communications of the Empire, the "game was up." The Empire would automatically cease to exist. Fragment by fragment it must disintegrate, and, if war continued long enough, starvation would overtake the dense population at its heart. What palliative, Colomb demanded of his countrymen, would a standing army



of a million men provide against the spectre of ruined industries and perhaps slow starvation? What would be the use of a conscript army on the continental scale to a belligerent who had lost the means of putting its soldiers upon the continent? So long, then, as there was any danger of the Navy proving inadequate to fulfil its vital function of keeping open the sea communications, the cure for that appalling menace was not to provide more soldiers to slowly starve, or fret in impotent inactivity on the soil of the Motherland, but to add more and more ships to the British Fleet, until such a preponderance of naval force was at our disposal as would ensure that the vital condition of sea command should be fulfilled.

Such being Colomb's conception of the part which must be played by the British Fleet in war, his ideals regarding the organization and strength of the military forces of the Empire were necessarily co-ordinated upon it. The entire fabric of our military policy reposed, in his view, upon the condition precedent of a Navy strong enough to give us the command of the sea. It followed that the invasion of the United Kingdom on a large scale was a contingency which, in his view, ought not to be considered, or, as he would himself probably have put it, the implication

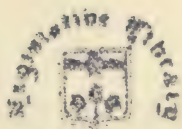
was not so much that invasion was absolutely impossible, as that, amongst the dangers to which a political organization of the unique character of the British Empire is in war time likely to be exposed, the chance of successful invasion must be regarded as a minimum, since in any case the calamity was only one of several others which might or might not take place if we permanently lost command of the sea. When that was lost, all was lost. But, unless and until that supreme disaster overtook us, Colomb's view was that the blow at the heart could not be delivered; we could not successfully be invaded in force.

And here we may pause for a moment to notice that the opinion expressed by John Colomb, and the little company of sturdy pioneers who thought with him, has, by sheer force of argument, now not only reached a position of general acceptance from both political parties in the State, but from soldiers and sailors also. If we may judge from the recent public pronouncements of successive Prime Ministers, it is to-day an axiom of Imperial Defence policy. Opinions may indeed still differ as to the maximum force, which, embarking on board swift transports and employing tactics of evasion, might elude the guard of the British Fleet and effect a temporary lodgment on the soil of Great

Britain. But the principle that the permanent invasion of the United Kingdom in force is so improbable a contingency that it may safely be neglected, is now generally conceded.

What, then, are the functions of the British Army? Colomb, with his clear grip upon the essential factors of the problem, had no hesitation on this point. The Army was to be "the spear," the Navy "the shield." The military needs of the Empire demanded, firstly, garrisons for the naval bases and defended ports in the United Kingdom and abroad; secondly, an army for the defence of India; and, thirdly, an expeditionary force for service outside the United Kingdom. Incidentally the necessity for providing periodical reliefs for our garrisons abroad and in India guaranteed the presence in the United Kingdom at any given moment of a considerable force of regulars.

To these self-evident necessities on the military side prudence adds also the provision of a force for home defence large enough to give a good account of any raiding expedition which might effect a temporary landing. Herein lies the justification for the Territorial Army. Whatever its merits or defects, it exists for the fulfilment of this duty. Much has been written lately in criticism of





its shortcomings in numbers and in training, and Lord Roberts himself has lately thrown all the weight of his great authority into a patriotic endeavour to awaken British people to its weakness in these respects. The personal magnetism and military reputation of our greatest living soldier are doing their work, and there can be little doubt that the nation, as a whole, has been deeply stirred. It is uneasy ; and so far as this uneasiness results in improved military training and organization, all Englishmen will wish well to the movement. But, against any attempt to raise in Great Britain a home-defence army on the continental scale, we may be sure that John Colomb would have set his face as a flint. For, even if our national resources permitted—as they would not—of our maintaining at one and the same time a fleet on the present standard and a home-defence army on the continental scale, he regarded an army on the latter scale as needless, and, therefore, wasteful dissipation of strategic effort. It is because there appears to be some danger that the criticism of our military organization may rise to a crescendo of panic which may hurl us towards those useless and dangerous strategic theories which John Colomb set himself to combat two generations ago, that the publication of this

volume is opportune. His outlook was singularly free from bias towards the military or the naval professions. He deprecated any kind of rivalry between the two Services ; he regarded them as being as essentially two parts of a whole as the hilt and blade of a sword. No just conclusion, he held, could be reached as to the strength or the disposition of the Army without also considering the strength and disposition of the Fleet. To discuss the Navy Estimates and the Army Estimates in separate watertight compartments seemed to him the height of absurdity. But he went much further than this. Recognizing that armaments depend upon policy, he looked forward to the institution of a central Council of Defence at which not merely the Army and the Navy, but the Cabinet, and more particularly the Foreign Office, should be represented ; and, some years before his death, he saw, in the creation of the Defence Committee, the fulfilment of his hope.

His imagination indeed took a still wider sweep. By a process of logical deduction he predicted the necessity which, seen dimly fifty years ago, grips Imperial statesmanship by the throat to-day. John Colomb, in a word, foresaw the time when, if the Empire was to hold together, it would be essential to call the Dominions to the

Imperial council-board. To the present writer the whole future of Imperial Unity appears to focus upon this great ideal, and the steps which have been taken towards its realization must be now alluded to very briefly.

As regards Naval Defence, it will be remembered that at the Imperial Conference of 1909 the Admiralty enunciated the unimpeachable truism that "the greatest output of strength for a given expenditure is obtained by the maintenance of a single Navy with concomitant unity of training and unity of command," and they added the sufficiently obvious rider that "the maximum power would be gained if all parts of the Empire contributed to the sources of the British Navy." In greater or less degree each of the Oversea Dominions did, as a consequence of that Conference, contribute something more to the general stock of the naval resources of the Empire, and no one who has followed the trend of public opinion in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa during the last two years can doubt that, on the whole, the sense of a solidarity of interests on defence matters between themselves and the Mother-Country is everywhere growing.

But, unless the defensive league between ourselves and the Oversea Dominions is to disappear with the lapse of time, and the



growth in the Dominions of the sense of nationality, it is urgently important that a way should be found as quickly as possible for reconciling the very natural desire of these young communities for a voice in the shaping of the Foreign Policy of the Empire, and for a control over their now rapidly growing expenditure on defence, with the fundamental strategic principle of single control in war on which every seaman and strategist naturally insists. That unity of strength is as true in strategy as elsewhere, and (though the lesson is more than 2,000 years old), the experience of Athens and the break-up of the Delian League points a moral which must not be disregarded. The difficulties which confront us, though great, are not insurmountable. Various proposals have been put forward from time to time to meet them. The one which seems to the present writer the most promising is the creation of a local Naval Board in each Dominion to administer the local naval finances, and in peace time supervise its own naval personnel and material, thus giving a large measure of local control; and the admission, side by side with the creation of these Local Boards, of representatives of the Dominions to the councils of the Admiralty in Whitehall.

It is at least possible that similar pro-

posals might be worked out for ensuring to each Dominion the local control, in peace, of her military forces, side by side with a cordial welcome of her military experts at the headquarters of our own Imperial General Staff. The recent creation of that Staff is itself not merely a measure of the greatest strategical importance, but politically it is a pledge of military co-operation and mutual assistance in warlike preparation the significance of which can scarcely be exaggerated.

For the present, and until wars finally cease upon the earth, the main interest of any people must still be not commercial gain but security ; the certitude of safety against warlike aggression. The danger seems to be that this aspect of the Imperial Federation problem may be overlooked.

The forces of disintegration, trifling by comparison, are fully in evidence ; much is made of opposing fiscal and financial interests, and of minor questions in which the Motherland and the Dominions do not see eye to eye. Hence the urgent need of a marshalling of the forces, surely vastly stronger than any centrifugal tendencies, which make for unity and federation. We want a quickened sense of the family bond, of the feeling that "no distance breaks the ties of blood, brothers are brothers ever-

more," and that when we speak with the enemy in the gate we speak with a united voice. A special importance, therefore, attaches to the policy recently inaugurated as regards both Naval and Military Defence, of active and constant interchange of information, and of the personnel of the Staffs, at the headquarters of the Mother-Country and of the Dominions. The object in view is, of course, primarily, to ensure that when war breaks out the whole complicated machinery of Imperial Defence works smoothly and with lightning speed. But a secondary advantage of no mean importance is also to be looked for, since every officer and man interchanged between the Home and Dominion Staffs is unconsciously discharging the functions of an ambassador of Empire, and preaching by the mere fact of his presence the essential doctrine of the brotherhood of the British race.

The sense of racial fraternity between the English-speaking peoples will be fostered in proportion as such interchange becomes habitual and a matter of course. But this invaluable moral factor in the problem cannot be expected to survive unless side by side with the burdens borne by the Dominions in the personnel and material of Defence, goes a fair share of Representation in shaping the Foreign Policy of the Empire. The means



by which this essential condition of Imperial Unity is to be brought about demand anxious and careful consideration. Mr. d'Egville himself makes certain proposals on the subject which are important.

To sum up. We appear to have arrived at a parting of the ways. The question of Imperial Representation hammers at the doors. Unless advantage is taken of the opportunity to-day, that opportunity may be lost for ever. This little book will not have been written in vain if it serves to draw attention to the fine contribution which John Colomb made towards a correct understanding of Imperial problems and their rational solution, and for this reason it is to be hoped that Mr. d'Egville's volume will be widely and sympathetically read.

CHARLES L. OTTLEY.

**PRINCIPLES AND POLICY, 1859-1888**





## CHAPTER I

### PRINCIPLES AND POLICY, 1859-1888

*"Sir John Colomb, the father of modern English naval strategy and the pioneer of Imperial Defence. No more original and no more judicious mind has been engaged in the study of these problems during the last forty years, and if sound ideas on naval war, and on its place in the defence of the United Kingdom and the Empire, are now more widespread than they were fifteen or twenty years ago, the change is due chiefly to Sir John Colomb, of whom all the British thinkers on maritime war are directly or indirectly the disciples."*—Morning Post.<sup>1</sup>

Introductory.—Sir John Colomb as early exponent of Principles of Imperial Defence.—Period covered by present Work.—Connexion between Defence Policy and Closer Union of Empire.—Defence Principles at beginning of century contrasted with Policy of 1859.—"Steam has bridged the Channel."—Royal Commission of 1859 and its findings.—Sir John Colomb on Protection of Commerce, the purely Military Spirit, Co-operation with Colonies, and Striking Army.—Invasion Scare of 1871.—Lord Cardwell on Principles of Defence—Sir John Colomb on Command of Sea and Imperial Water Roads and plea for controlling power over Navy and Army.—Carnarvon Commission of 1879.—The new revelation, "Imperial Defence."—Sir John Colomb and necessity for Naval Intelligence Department.—Need for systematic study of Sea Commerce in relation to Naval Operations.—Creation of new Department at Admiralty.—

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<sup>1</sup> See article on death of Sir John Colomb in issue of May 28, 1909.

## 4 IMPERIAL DEFENCE AND CLOSER UNION

Imperial Federation and larger aspects of British Defence.—Divorce between Admiralty and War Office, an influence against Colonial Co-operation.—Sir John Colomb begins work in House of Commons.—Relations of Navy and Army when considered in Parliament.—Differences between Admiralty and War Office regarding Invasion.—Necessity of central control.—Hartington Commission, 1888.—Combined action between two Departments necessary.—Suggested Naval and Military Council.

STUDENTS of defence and of modern political and economic conditions may find some difficulty, during the whirl of present controversy, in tracing the principles which lie at the basis of British Defence and which must ultimately form the bed-rock of closer union if the Empire is to endure. This difficulty arises from the fact that though the principles affecting the safety of states and the regulation of war are unchanging, the administrators of the last half century have, with one or two exceptions, ignored the fundamental truths of the British position, and have yielded to popular delusions, and sought to allay popular fears, by the acceptance of doctrines which logically involved the assumption that the Empire and the Navy had ceased to exist.

Policies of the last fifty years have provided for huge expenditure upon fortifications, or upon training men to defend the hedgerows of England when maritime supremacy should have passed

from British hands, and statesmen have contemplated with equanimity the abandonment of sea supremacy in the defence of a world-wide Empire. But during all this time the fight for British safety upon the seas was waged by a small band of pioneers, who, in the later phases of our Empire's story, have seen the acceptance of the principles for which they have striven, and the recognition of the Unity and Defence of the Empire as the basis of British policy. Some record of the strenuous fight, therefore, should not only be full of instruction for students of the present day, but should also prove of real utility to those administrators and politicians who desire to avoid the errors of the past.

It would be useless to attempt to place any such record before the public apart from the life-work of one man, who, during the early days of the history of Empire Defence, left his career in the Service to lead the onslaught against the bulwarks of popular prejudice and delusion, supported as they were by official apathy and confusion of thought, and lived long enough to see the principles for which he fought take a firm, and, it is hoped, lasting root in the minds of leading statesmen. That man is the late Sir John Colomb, and round his life-work the present small volume is written in the belief that this treatment will most



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effectively serve the end in view ; viz., a clear enunciation of the principles of British Defence, and a plain indication of the lines along which it is hoped the statesmen of the great sister-nations may proceed in the endeavour to promote the co-ordination of the resources of the Empire in peace, and their effective combination to ensure its safety in war.

The period of half a century which is covered by the following pages has been chosen for many reasons, the chief of which it is sufficient, perhaps, to state here. Firstly, then, it has been chosen because the years since 1860 have been the most fruitful in affording illustrations of past failure to recognize the British Empire as a fact in relation to its defence, and opportunities are consequently provided of pointing the lesson of the future ; secondly, because the work of the pioneers, led by the brothers Colomb, took place within this period, and changed the whole current of thought, and in the end the policy and practice, of successive Admiralty and War Office administrators ; and thirdly, because the later of these eventful years have seen the awakening of Greater Britain to the call of a maritime Empire.

It would, perhaps, appear to the superficial observer of the defensive history of the last fifty years that many of the phases through which



we have passed have had little bearing upon Imperial Unity. But when it is remembered that during the time referred to the United Kingdom has regulated the defensive policy of the whole Empire, and has been responsible for its safety, it is not difficult to see that adherence to principles, and continuity of thought, in dealing with the problems with which the Mother-Country has been faced, must have had the greatest possible effect both upon the course taken by the Oversea States in the past and upon the steps they may contemplate in the future. Statesmen of the United Kingdom, therefore, who failed to recognize that the Defence of the Empire did not resolve itself merely into the defence of the shores of the United Kingdom, and that the functions of the Navy and the Army were inter-related as part of a world-problem and not to be understood by putting the Admiralty and War Office into water-tight compartments, were not only responsible for huge expenditure on useless works at home, but were ignoring the existence of the Empire as a single organism, and the disastrous results which would attend the omission to include the growing States oversea in the formation of any scheme of Empire Defence. That the shortsightedness of statesmen, anxious to please an insular and ignorant people, did not



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cause the break-up of the Empire as a maritime State, was due, in a large measure, to Sir John Colomb, who, from the early years of his prolonged campaign on behalf of Imperial defensive organization, never failed to insist on the essential Unity of the Empire, and the urgent necessity of looking upon the defence of each portion of it as part of a scheme for the defence of the whole.

The observations that follow will deal with the struggle for the recognition of principles and their application to practical policy ; but in order to appreciate the subject from the wider aspect, as affecting the Empire, it will be necessary to pay some attention to the main features of our defensive history during the eventful half century which closed with the year 1912.

During the early years of the nineteenth century it is roughly correct to say that the object of our military expenditure was to provide an Army which could be ready for service beyond the seas as a necessary complement to naval power, the local military defence of these Islands being left to the Militia, so far as that might be necessary under the protection of the Fleet. The real nature of superior sea force was impressed on the public mind perhaps with the greatest force by Trafalgar, and the great act of folly committed by Napoleon when he ignored the elements of sea-power during



his ill-fated expedition to Egypt.<sup>1</sup> But shortly before the year 1859 public opinion underwent a change, brought about in a large measure by the concentration of public attention upon the military drama in the Crimea, followed by the Indian Mutiny and the War in China. The Fleet not being uppermost in the public mind, it was easy to overlook the fundamental fact that the combined Fleets of England and France asserted the maritime supremacy of the allies and rendered the

<sup>1</sup> See "British Defence, 1800-1900" read by Sir John Colomb before Royal Colonial Institute, April 10, 1900, and published in *British Dangers* (London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co.), pp. 21-22.

On this subject Admiral A. T. Mahan writes: "Bonaparte, to quote a French author, never attained 'le sentiment exact des difficultés maritimes.' The Army had advanced into the enemy's country; it had seized its first objective; but the blow was not fatal and its own communications were in deadly danger. There was no relieving force to throw in supplies and reinforcements, as to Gibraltar twenty years before, because the hostile Navy controlled the intervening country—the sea. . . . The whole undertaking from beginning to end illustrates Lord Kitchener's comment on present day conditions. There is the enforced absence of the British Navy due to contemporary military and naval conditions, occasioned by the events of the war in the years immediately preceding, and there is the disastrous ultimate result as soon as the superior Navy recovered its freedom of action." See *Naval Strategy*, p. 186 (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co.)

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sea safe for operations in Russia. A riddle in *Punch* aptly described the popular misconception of the position. It was asked, "What is the difference between the Fleet in the Baltic and the Fleet in the Black Sea?" The answer being, "The Fleet in the Baltic was expected to do everything and it did nothing; the Fleet in the Black Sea was expected to do nothing and it did it." Though these Fleets did everything required of maritime supremacy, and "sea command was absolute, without effort, by the alliance of the three greatest maritime Powers in the world,"<sup>1</sup> the public were not able to realize the silent power of the Navy, and statesmen and people were led to doubt the capability of maritime force to save an island people from the bugbear of invasion. The Prime Minister (Lord Palmerston) declared that "steam has bridged the Channel." The popular voice re-echoed the statement and clamoured for expenditure upon forts and forces, in the fond belief that the country would thus be saved from the consequences involved by a sudden descent of a hostile force upon our shores. The result was the appointment in 1859 of a Royal Commission to inquire into the present state, condition, and sufficiency of the fortifications existing and projected for the defence of the

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Colomb in *British Dangers*, p. 23.

United Kingdom and for considering the most effectual means of placing the Kingdom in a complete state of defence,<sup>1</sup> and the Commissioners proceeded to consider the defence of the United Kingdom against foreign invasion. Basing their calculations upon the inability of the Fleet to discharge its functions in war, and assuming, without any evidence, that the Fleet might be disabled by storm, overpowered, or temporarily absent, the Commissioners reported "since the application of steam to the propulsion of vessels, we can no longer rely upon being able to prevent the landing of a hostile force in the country," and having made the astounding assertion that an invading Army might be "thrown on shore in two or three hours" proceeded to consider the means of defence against an enemy *when landed*. The Commissioners dismissed the combined forces of Navy, Standing Army, and Volunteers as inadequate to resist invasion, and found salvation in "fortifications."<sup>2</sup> Huge outlays upon military

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission on the Defence of the United Kingdom, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Commenting upon the recommendation of the Royal Commission of 1859-60 to spend enormous sums on the local defence of Portsmouth, Plymouth, the Thames, and the Medway, on the plea that the country would never stand the expense of maintaining a Channel Fleet sufficiently powerful to cover these ports and therefore to preserve the water com-



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works resulted from the Report of this Commission, and the influence of it was paramount for a considerable period and laid the foundation for much of the policy of wasteful expenditure of successive Secretaries for War.

The abandonment of principles which had made the United Kingdom great and laid the foundations of our maritime Empire, received vigorous treatment from Sir John Colomb, who, after many years of study, entered the public arena in 1867 with the publication of *Protection of Commerce in War*,<sup>1</sup> standing alone at that time as the exponent of the doctrine of sea supremacy in relation to the defence of the United Kingdom, and the safety of its oversea commerce and possessions. In this able essay he declared "in all naval and military operations, whether offensive or defensive, there is a golden rule, to neglect which is certain ruin; it is the fundamental law which applies to all warfare and is simply this, that the success of

munications, Admiral P. H. Colomb wrote in 1889 "it is now scarcely conceivable that such an argument could ever have been put forward except as a joke!" See *Essays on Naval Defence* (London: W. H. Allen & Co.), p. 6.

<sup>1</sup> It was in respect of this pamphlet that Admiral P. H. Colomb wrote "it may be fairly said to have given the keynote to all subsequent discussions." See also Author's Note.

all operations depends upon the disposition of the forces in such a manner as will best secure the base of operations and ensure safety and freedom of communication."

In a notable article appearing in 1872<sup>1</sup> Sir John Colomb reviewed defensive arrangements and policy from 1859. He said: "The first thing of striking importance is the growth of a purely military spirit amongst us, plainly exhibited (1) by the spontaneous action of the nation in arming and organizing itself into a Volunteer Force of 170,000 binding itself to serve for the defence of Great Britain only; (2) the resuscitation and total re-organization by successive Governments of the Militia and Yeomanry, a force of some 150,000 legally bound to serve only in Great Britain and Ireland; (3) the complete re-organization of our regular Army—'horse, foot, and artillery'; (4) the construction of splendid fortifications and military works in the United Kingdom at Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham, etc., which did not exist twenty years ago. Now, the whole of these great, extraordinary, and rapid movements in a purely *military* direction spring

<sup>1</sup> The article originally appeared in the *British Trade Journal* of January 1, 1872, and subsequently formed Chapter ii of *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain* (London: Edward Stanford, 1880).

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originally from a feeling of national insecurity, created by the fall of the national confidence in the power of the 'wooden walls of old England' to protect these Islands from invasion."<sup>1</sup> In this same paper Sir John Colomb went on to point out that the national stake on the water was then four times as great as in 1859, and warned his readers of the danger of forgetting that "the purely military defence of our Empire *as a whole* must ever be secondary to its naval security." He pleaded for a more equal distribution of the burdens of naval defence between the Mother-Country and the Colonies, starting here the idea, in respect of which subsequent chapters will show the development, that "we must not ask our Colonies simply for cash, but we must enlist their active sympathy and practical help in a common effort for a common good. If the foundation stones of any real system of British Naval Defence are ever to be laid, the Colonies must be called into consultation on the matter." He ended by asking for a Royal Commission to be appointed

<sup>1</sup> Writing much later (in 1899) Admiral P. H. Colomb said: "Every re-examination I make, every fresh illustration that I bring before my mind with the view of balancing it, tends more and more to raise the value of all that keeps up communication by sea, and to lower the value of all absolutely fixed local Defences." *Essays on Naval Defence*, p. 19.



to inquire into a subject of such vital importance to each and all parts of the Empire, which he thought would not fail to lay down "principles ensuring ultimate co-operation and practical success."

It must not be supposed from the foregoing that Sir John Colomb was ever such an exponent of the so-called "blue-water" doctrine as to ignore the necessity of military force as the complement of the Navy.<sup>1</sup> So far back as 1870<sup>2</sup> while protesting against the attempt to "Prussianize" our system, he showed that our defence was not a purely naval question, because "First, National Defence does not mean merely the defence of these small islands; Second, the defence of a country is best secured by being prepared to carry war into that of an enemy."<sup>3</sup> In other words, Sir John

<sup>1</sup> In the course of the article in the *Morning Post*, from which an extract is quoted at the head of this chapter, the writer, in referring to Sir John Colomb and his brother, Admiral P. H. Colomb, said: "They were among the ablest exponents of the 'Blue Water School' properly so-called; but even the most ignorant and unconscientious faddist would find in their works no support for the so-called tenets of the imaginary 'Blue-Water School,' which has from time to time been set up to do duty as a scarecrow."

<sup>2</sup> *Imperial Strategy* (London: Edward Stanford, 1871).

<sup>3</sup> It is pointed out by the well-known Naval authority, Mr. James R. Thursfield, with characteristic clearness, that "It is hardly a paradox to say that all defence is

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Colomb believed that no war on the seas in which the Empire was engaged could ever be brought to a successful conclusion without a "striking" Army for the purpose of transport oversea to carry war into the enemy's camp, and, therefore, he deprecated heavy expenditure upon military forces whose liability for service was confined to these shores. To use a simile frequently employed by him in reference to the defence of a maritime Empire, "The Navy is the shield to guard and the Army is the spear to strike"; but the length of time which elapsed before the official acceptance of this now very obvious truth will appear from a perusal of subsequent observations.

The public of England, however, scared by the ruin of the French Empire in a few short weeks of war, were ready to see in that event a confirmation. It is nothing but the truth to say that attack is by far the most effective form of defence. 'The more you hurt the enemy' said Farragut 'the less likely he is to hurt you,' and all operations of warfare between belligerents of anything like equal power are conducted on this principle. The belligerent who acts purely on the defensive is already more than half-beaten, and is probably only holding out in the hope either of receiving assistance from without or of his assailant becoming exhausted. In either case, the offensive is resumed the moment it becomes possible." See "The Higher Policy of Defence" appearing in *Nelson and other Naval Studies*, by J. R. Thursfield (London: John Murray), pp. 343-4.

tion of the doctrines laid down by the military Royal Commission of 1859, and were induced to believe that "passive" defence, or the creation of forces to be locked up behind forts "waiting to be attacked," was the beginning and end of national safety. The picture of War Office ideals was painted by Mr. (afterwards Lord) Cardwell in introducing his scheme of Army reform in 1871. He said: "Out of all the curious whirl of scientific controversy one thing emerges clear, that scientific defence is gaining on scientific attack. I believe if we agree to arm our population, as we propose to arm them, and if we avail ourselves of our national means of defence by placing torpedoes in all our harbours and rivers, and rifles behind our ditches and hedges, the time has arrived when we need no longer give way to panic or fear of invasion."

It is difficult to exaggerate the shortsighted folly and confusion of thought involved in the above statement, ignoring as it does the whole basis of defence necessary not only for an island but for an Empire having territories throughout the habitable globe. "Consider for one moment," Sir John Colomb asked in a paper read before the Royal Colonial Institute, "on what the presumption of possible invasion rests. It rests on this—the loss, temporary or permanent, of the command



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of the waters surrounding the British Islands. But remember that the lines of communication all radiate from these waters ; the loss, therefore, of our command here cuts every one of the Imperial lines ; and what is this but investment ? ” <sup>1</sup>

Once again, it was laid down in this paper that “ the command of the sea can only be maintained by a scientific combination of three things—strategy, purely military force, and purely naval power. The command of the sea is nothing more nor less than the command of the Imperial roads,<sup>2</sup> the securing of the first line of colonial defences.” Rather, then, than a military force tied to the shores of England, Sir John Colomb indicated the necessity in the defence of Imperial communications of a mobile military force, and asserted

<sup>1</sup> “ Colonial Defence,” a paper read before the Royal Colonial Institute, June 28, 1873, and forming Chapter iii of *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Julian S. Corbett writes : “ Command of the sea means nothing but the control of sea communications. . . In maritime warfare the control of communications takes exactly the place which in the sister art is occupied by the conquest of territory ; and when we say that the primary object of our battle fleets must always be the destruction of the battle fleets of the enemy, what we really mean is that the primary function of our battle fleets is to seize and prevent the enemy from seizing the main lines of communication. See *England in the Seven Years' War* (London : Longmans, Green & Co.), Vol. i at p. 308.

that as military force is necessary to the support of naval power, and as in our case military force is in its turn dependent upon naval power, "the distribution of the one must have reference to that of the other."

In this paper above referred to, and in a subsequent paper,<sup>1</sup> Sir John Colomb demonstrated the fallacy that Colonial Defence could be considered as an abstract question, or that National Defence could be limited to the defence of the United Kingdom. He pointed out that we could only secure the Imperial water-roads by a firm grasp of the points which command them, and that Fleets would be paralysed if the points between which they were to operate were not held by military forces sufficient to render the protection of sea-going Fleets unnecessary. As the Imperial strategic points "had been and are utterly neglected" Sir John Colomb urged the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the matter. So important is the following passage in view of subsequent history that it is well to give it in full: "Some change appears necessary in the administration of our war forces, because as the protection of the Imperial roads is partly naval and partly

<sup>1</sup> "Imperial and Colonial Responsibilities in War," read before Royal Colonial Institute, May, 1877, and forming Chapter iv of *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*.

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military, there is no one controlling power over both; the Admiralty may scatter fleets in one direction, the War Office tie up military forces in another, but there is no power to combine the two, and without such combination each branch of our war power of defence would be helpless.”<sup>1</sup>

But the lines of communication so vital to the preservation of the Empire in war, as constantly insisted upon by Sir John Colomb, did not receive detailed consideration till the year 1879, when another Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into “the Defence of our Coaling Stations abroad.” This Commission, presided over by Lord Carnarvon, did not make public either the evidence taken or its Report<sup>2</sup>; but a further expenditure upon fortifications evidenced the military character of the Report, due, no doubt, to similar exaggerated notions of naval possibilities which influenced the Commission of 1859. The Commission was, however, in the words of Sir John Colomb writing many years later,<sup>3</sup> “an epoch-making event. It was the official acknowledgment that the theory of insular defence, even

<sup>1</sup> *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> A great deal of it was, however, subsequently published in the *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference*, 1887; see p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> “Army Policy Past and Present,” *National Review*, June 1904.



in its purely military aspect, was a sham, and that to secure these islands the Empire as a whole must be defended. Thus came the new revelation—Imperial Defence; and the War Office idol was shaken on its pedestal in Pall Mall.”

Having traced very roughly some of the main features of policy, largely, it will be seen, regulated by considerations of a military character, it will be well to turn for a moment to matters more closely affecting the protection of our commerce upon the high seas.

The trend of thought at the period mentioned can perhaps best be appreciated by the following observations made by Sir John Colomb in the course of a Lecture delivered on May 13, 1881, entitled “Naval Intelligence and Protection of Commerce in War.”<sup>1</sup> He wrote: “Public opinion will not apparently turn out of the current of ever-changing, but now always purely military, theories of insular defence requirements, to a calm, quiet contemplation of the grim realities of modern maritime war to a people dependent on the sea for daily bread.”

The Lecture was without doubt the ablest argument that had yet appeared in this country for the urgent need of an efficient Naval Intelli-

<sup>1</sup> See *Journal of Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. XXV.

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gence Department, and, in fact, directly led to the creation of that Department at the Admiralty. The sad neglect of the Navy in this most vital direction was shown when Sir John Colomb declared: "I, for one, feel confident that our Admiralty struggles hard to obtain complete foreign information with the *miserably scanty means* provided by the country for collecting it. It is a noteworthy fact that, while we have a great Military 'Intelligence Department,' and besides have a Military Attaché at the Courts of the great Powers, we are quite content that one solitary naval officer should be charged with watching the naval developments and preparations of the whole of Europe."

In proceeding to demonstrate the need of a special and distinct Intelligence Department, so constituted as to be in a position to ensure that the Admiralty should at all times have at its command the fullest and most complete information respecting the position of our commerce on the sea, the author indicated the lines of the intelligence required, one being in relation to blockade and the other to the direct protection of commerce. In the latter connexion he wished to see a systematic study of the general laws governing the distribution of British sea commerce throughout the world, of the influences which particular

wars would be likely to produce on the direction and value of British commerce passing over different sea-lines, of the development of grain-producing lands and the food supply of the United Kingdom in war, of the direction of coal exports from England and the Colonies, of the constitution and speed of every merchant steamer in the world capable of adaptation as a war cruiser, and of the movements of foreign ships of war. Sir John wished really to see a "Commercial Intelligence Council" presided over by an Admiral with a seat at the Board of Admiralty, and having subordinate departments in our great Colonies, and showed by means of diagrams and tables how impossible it was, without a complete system of intelligence, to provide for the three great naval operations in war, viz.—

- 1st. The blockade of the enemy's coast;
- 2nd. The securing of the ocean routes of the world;
- 3rd. Coast covering operations off neutral seaboard to provide safety for our commerce on passage between such seaboard and the ocean routes.

In the year following the delivery of this Lecture, the then First Lord of the Admiralty, (Lord Northbrook), referred to the paper, and



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stated that the Board of Admiralty had taken the matter into consideration and hoped to set on foot a system which would bring together the scattered materials of Naval Intelligence. In the Navy estimates of 1884-5 appeared for the first time a charge of £1,796 for "Foreign Intelligence Committee," but it was not until February 1, 1887, that it became a "Naval Intelligence Department," when the charge amounted to £4,648. It may be pertinent to remark here that it was very many years before the amount of the charge for the Naval Intelligence Department even approached the charge for the Military Intelligence Department at the War Office.

Other aspects of the Naval situation brought into prominence both by the rapid development of the Oversea Colonies and the growth of the sea interests of the United Kingdom were made apparent about this time, but for further details as to the movement towards co-operation in defence between the United Kingdom and the Oversea States the reader is referred to Chapters III and IV. It is sufficient for the moment to say that the formation of the Imperial Federation League (of which Sir John Colomb was one of the Founders and original Vice-Chairmen) in 1885, and the delivery of a Lecture by Sir John Colomb, entitled "Imperial Federation, Naval and Mili-

tary ”<sup>1</sup> had a very distinct influence in turning the current of official thought towards the larger aspects of British Defence.

But still the strange divorce between the Admiralty and the War Office, and the absence of any co-ordinating power regulating the functions of the two Departments, was responsible not only for wasteful expenditure, but also for the impossibility of framing any really adequate system of British Defence, or of bringing the great and growing Oversea Dominions into effective combination with the United Kingdom. Not knowing what we ourselves wanted, it was not surprising that the 1887 Conference between the representatives of the Oversea Colonies and the Home Government was so barren of results ; but if the two great spending Departments had been in close consultation, Chapters III and IV of this book would, probably, have told a different tale, and might have recorded the history of a real and adequate Imperial combination for the safety of the Empire in war.

Seeing how great was the necessity for taking every step possible to bring about co-ordination between the two Services, Sir John Colomb entered

<sup>1</sup> Lecture before the Royal United Service Institution on May 31, 1886. King Edward VII (then Prince of Wales) was present, and the late Duke of Cambridge occupied the Chair.

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the House of Commons as Member for Bow and Bromley in the year 1886.<sup>1</sup> He was not long in proceeding to the attack, for, after several speeches on defence during 1887, he moved a Resolution on March 5, 1888 in these terms: "That it is desirable that this House, before having submitted to its consideration the Army Estimates, should be in possession of an explanatory statement from Her Majesty's Government setting forth the general principles of defence which have determined the gross amount proposed to be allocated to naval and military purposes respectively, and indicating the main lines of the general plan, or programme, of British Defence, to which the Admiralty and War Office administration, arrangement and expenditure are respectively to conform."

In his speech in support of the Resolution Sir John Colomb was brought face to face with a difficulty that perhaps illustrated his argument better than he could have hoped. In considering the relation of the Army to the Navy, and pointing out that although our sea interests had grown enormously we spent four millions more upon

<sup>1</sup> From the year 1886 to 1892, Sir John Colomb represented Bow and Bromley. From the year 1895 to 1900, and again from 1900 to 1905, Sir John Colomb represented Great Yarmouth.



the Army than upon the Navy, he was called to order by the Speaker, who considered the observation would be more properly made upon the Navy Estimates. However, Sir John was able to get his points home, and these he summed up as follows: "It was proposed to have the Army Estimates discussed by a Committee, who would, however, only deal with the military part, while the Naval Estimates would be referred to another Committee who would only deal with the naval part." He thought they were working a system of National Defence in two watertight compartments, without any real responsibility, and no central controlling authority for both. "Our safety in war," he affirmed, "would have to be evolved out of dual control and divided responsibility."

On June 4 of the same year Sir John Colomb returned to the attack,<sup>1</sup> and charged the War Office with assuming Naval conditions without inquiry, more especially in relation to the Invasion of England. In reply to the War Secretary's assertion that the Intelligence Departments of the Navy and Army were in communication, Sir John Colomb asked how it was that the head of the War Office Intelligence Department stated that 150,000 men could be landed on these shores in a week, while the First Lord of the Admiralty stated that

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. cccxxvi.

it was impossible for 100,000 men to be conveyed across the Channel without absorbing the total carrying power of France, and that the operations would consume weeks. By such examples he drove home his point that "working the defence of the country under two Departments without central control they never got at the truth or at a correct basis as to how they should proceed."

Meanwhile, the strenuous work of Sir John Colomb and those who were pressing the claims of a supreme Fleet as the most urgent necessity for all parts of the British Empire was beginning to make itself felt, and many representative men, not hitherto specially interested in defence, awoke to the fact that all was not well with the Navy in comparison to foreign countries, and that its functions in relation to the Army were ill-defined and unsatisfactory. So it came about that yet another Royal Commission<sup>1</sup> was appointed in 1888, under the Chairmanship of Lord Hartington, to examine "the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments, and the relation of those Departments to each other."

The Report of this Commission afforded a clear vindication of that for which Sir John Colomb had contended up till almost the day of its appointment, for, in referring to the two great Depart-

<sup>1</sup> c. 5979.

ments, the Report stated : " While in action they must be to a large extent dependent on each other, and while in some of the arrangements necessary as a preparation for war they are absolutely dependent on the assistance of each other, little or no attempt has ever been made to establish settled and regular inter-communication or relations between them, or to secure that the establishment of one Service should be determined with any reference to the requirements of the other." Later, the Commissioners asserted that " no combined plan of operations for the Defence of the Empire in any given contingency has ever been worked out or decided upon by the two Departments," and again, " there does not appear to us to exist sufficient provision for the consideration by either service of the wants of the other . . . and there is a want of such definite and established relations between the Admiralty and the War Office as would give the opportunity to either Department of calling the attention of the other to the condition of the establishment and preparations in which it is vitally interested."

The Commissioners made various recommendations as to the internal arrangements of the Admiralty and War Office, providing for greater personal responsibility and the separation of executive from administrative duties, etc. ; but the



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suggestion of most interest and importance in the wider sense was, undoubtedly, that which had reference to the formation of a "Naval and Military Council" to be presided over by the Prime Minister, and to consist of the Parliamentary Heads of the two Services and their principal professional advisers. The Council might, it was also suggested, include officers of great reputation, but not holding official appointments in the Admiralty or War Office at the time, and it should meet before the Estimates of the year were decided on by the Cabinet "so that the establishments proposed for each Service should be discussed from the point of view of the other; and the relative importance of any proposed expenditure might be fully considered." The Council could, it was added, meet also from time to time to decide unsettled questions between the two Departments, and it would be essential that its proceedings and decisions should be recorded, "instances having occurred in which Cabinet decisions have been differently understood by the two Departments, and have become practically a dead letter."<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the above proposal in the

<sup>1</sup> Lord Randolph Churchill as a Member of the Commission appended a Memorandum to the Report in which he advocated the abolition of the Office of Secretary of State for War and

history of Imperial Defence can scarcely be over-estimated ; but, though meeting with hearty support from the pioneers of defence, it was consigned to the limbo of things forgotten by the officials, and not until many years later did it emerge under the title of the Committee of Imperial Defence.<sup>1</sup>

Some idea of the mistakes which might have been avoided, and of the valuable Imperial work which might have been accomplished by the earlier adoption of the proposal may, perhaps, be gained from a perusal of the following chapter, where an attempt will be made to trace some further stages of the gradual evolution towards an organized system of British Defence.

of the Board of the Admiralty, and the creation in their place of three new offices :

- (1) A Commander-in-Chief for the Navy,
- (2) A Commander-in-Chief for the Army, and
- (3) for the purpose of ensuring the control of Parliament and supplying the needed link between the Services a Secretary of State and Treasurer for the Sea and Land Forces of the Crown."

<sup>1</sup> See p. 57.





## **PRINCIPLES AND POLICY, 1888-1909**



## CHAPTER II

### PRINCIPLES AND POLICY, 1888-1909

*"Divided control means divided responsibility; and that in turn means no responsibility, or at least one very hard to fix."*—ADMIRAL A. T. MAHAN.<sup>1</sup>

Sir John Colomb on Council of Defence.—The Invasion of England based on Military theories.—Mr. Brodrick and Home Defence.—Sir John Colomb and Striking Force.—Examination into theories of Invasion.—French Ports and Transport Facilities.—Cabinet Committee of Defence.—The Militia as an Imperial Force.—Marine Garrisons for Naval Bases.—Danger of Dual Control.—Military Works and mobile Forces.—Wei-hai-Wei.—Lessons of War in South Africa, Naval and Military.—Mr. Brodrick and Army Reform.—Sir John Colomb on Military Defence of United Kingdom.—Cabinet Committee of Defence useless in controlling War Office.—Mr. Balfour establishes real Committee of Imperial Defence.—Recognition of Sir John Colomb's arguments.—Reference to Colonies and Committee.—Royal Commission on War in South Africa.—Esher Committee.—Proposals for development of Defence Committee.—Mr. Arnold-Forster's estimate of situation.—Mr. Balfour on Imperial Defence Committee and Invasion of England.—Navy and Army discussed together in House of Commons for first time.—Mr. Arnold-Forster and Mr. Haldane

<sup>1</sup> *Naval Administration and Warfare* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co.), p. 26.



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on Functions of Army.—Lord Roberts and Invasion of England.—Government position.—Subsequent investigations by Committee of Imperial Defence.—Mr. Asquith's Statement thereon.—Recognition of Principles for which Sir John Colomb contended.

IT will have been seen from the foregoing how much of the theory and practice of our defensive policy up to the appointment of the Hartington Commission had been based upon the possibility of a military "invasion of England." If the Report of that Commission had induced the Government of the day to realize the importance of bringing the heads of the two great Departments more closely together, a great portion of the subsequent campaign of Sir John Colomb might have been rendered unnecessary. As it was, the recommendation in favour of the creation of a Council of Imperial Defence was not acted upon. Speaking in the House of Commons on July 13, 1891,<sup>1</sup> Sir John Colomb advocated what was really an extension of the idea as outlined by the Hartington Commission, viz., a Council of Defence upon which "the Mother-Country and her Dependencies should be represented." The adequate treatment of this theme, however, in its earlier and later stages can more appropriately be deferred till the matter of co-operation of the Oversea Dominions in defence

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. ccclv.

is considered in greater detail,<sup>1</sup> and meantime it will be well if an attempt is made here to examine a little more fully than heretofore the attitude of the school of thought which considered that a policy based on the theory of a great military descent upon the British Isles was a wasteful War Office delusion, and, for a people purporting to control the destinies of a great Sea Empire, a hopeless acknowledgment of naval impotence.

That the preparation to resist the invasion of England by military means was so long a War Office ideal was due not so much to the incompetence of War Ministers as to the fact that their advisers were "too military to be war-like." But though the question of invasion had been demonstrated beyond all doubt to be mainly a naval one and the importance of providing troops for oversea service in any war in which the Empire might be engaged was clearly apparent, it was indeed disheartening to find Mr. St. John Brod-rick,<sup>2</sup> as representing the War Office in the House of Commons, adhering to the same old theory so late as 1896 in these words:—

"For some years past it has been felt that we must put the question of Home Defence in the front rank, and consider as subsidiary to it the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapters III, IV, and V.

<sup>2</sup> Now Viscount Midleton.

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question of the extent to which we might have to send forces abroad.”<sup>1</sup>

It would, no doubt, be interesting to discuss here how great was the responsibility of this Minister for the unpreparedness of our striking Army when war broke out in South Africa, and how little excuse he had for failure to grasp the elementary lessons of past history, which he had heard so often, indeed, in the House of Commons from such men as Sir John Colomb, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster and others ; but it will serve a more useful purpose if a glance is taken at a few of the arguments put forward by Sir John Colomb from the standpoint he repeatedly presented to the House.

On March 13, 1896, Sir John Colomb brought forward once again the motion set out on page 26, and devoted himself firstly to the diminution of the striking power of our Army oversea. He pointed out that we had greater land frontiers than any other Power in the world, and that though the defence of the Empire depended upon the co-operation of naval power with military force,

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 13th March, 1896—4th Series, Vol. 38, page 919. The passage quoted occurred in a speech of Mr. Brodrick's made in reply to the speech of Sir John Colomb in moving the motion to which reference is subsequently made in this Chapter.



yet the House was not permitted to discuss the policy of defence by the combined action of both Services. In showing that the Estimates of £17,000,000 provided for a number of men exceeding 500,000, it was to be observed that not one-third of that force was available to take the field overseas, and Sir John asked what was the origin of this want of mobility. He traced it to the influence of popular feelings of past times ; and he asserted that our military policy was based on the assumption that our primary danger was a great military invasion of these Islands, whereas the possibility of such an invasion was primarily a naval consideration. However great the foreign Army might be (Sir John Colomb observed), the soldiers could not swim across the water or come in balloons, so it was a question of ports and facilities for transport.

He then took France for illustration, as she was geographically the nearest Power, and pointed out that though our military preparations for passive defence had increased enormously, the steam transport of France had not increased to anything like the same extent. The ports between Dunkirk and Brest did not present the great steam transport necessary for an invading power, and the bulk of shipping transactions in every one of those ports was car-

ried on in British ships. Counting every steamer she had above two tons, France had only 1,200 vessels, and these were distributed over innumerable ports lying from Dunkirk in the Channel to Villefranche in the Mediterranean. To collect the larger vessels at any port, France would have to suspend the whole of her mercantile operations for many months. Sir John Colomb asked the House to think of the considerations in the mind of a possible invader, and in this connexion referred to the matter of the sea transport obtainable and the capacity of the ports suitable for the issue of the invading forces, more particularly in relation to their depth of water, the width of entrance, wharfage, rise and fall of tides, and the distance of ports from each other, as affecting the concentration as a whole. Arrangements for the uninterrupted issue of each separate portion of the expedition from each separate port, and the uninterrupted transit of each portion to the rendezvous either in the Channel or at the point of concentration on our coast, would also have to be considered, and this in addition to the means for disembarkation required, and the time it would take to hoist out the boats and appliances to land units of the military force sufficient for the purpose of covering the rest of the force.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The experiences of the South African War fully confirmed

Sir John Colomb believed that the possibility of invasion was regarded from a two-fold aspect—first, that we had lost command of the sea, and secondly, that our Fleet, though not beaten, might be decoyed away from the Channel. Even in the first-named event, it was shown that risk would be run in transporting troops,<sup>1</sup> and as

the views which Sir John Colomb had put forward regarding the many difficulties attending the transport of troops oversea. Writing in 1902, Sir John Colomb said “It is notorious that troops were ready to go to South Africa long before we could arrange to embark them. The difficulty was—ships. In the month of October 1899, for example, despite the strenuous efforts of the ablest officials, naval, military, and civil, used to the business, this happened—the greatest maritime power, commanding all its shipping resources, and using five of its greatest ports, did not succeed in floating and getting to sea in that month quite 32,000 troops, with less than 4,000 horses.” See *Our Ships, Colonies and Commerce in Time of War* (London: P. S. King & Son), p. 39.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Spenser Wilkinson, in their work on *Imperial Defence*, refer to the opinion of Admiral Colomb as expressed in a lecture of March 1, 1889, supported by Professor (now Sir John) Laughton in the discussion upon it, that “any Commander, if he be wise, will not undertake a territorial attack as long as his operations may be interrupted by a Fleet even considerably weaker than his own.” The authors, however, prefer to accept the doctrine of Admiral Colomb’s *Naval Warfare* (p. 221) “that an expedition of magnitude, with an object of attack which requires time to elapse for its reduction, must be protected by a naval force, and also a covering force large enough to engage on equal terms any



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regards the second, the concentration of transport strength would be a difficult work and would take a considerable time to effect, and as it would certainly be known, the Fleet would not be decoyed away. Such concentration would, of course, be impossible so long as we held command of the seas and regarded the enemy's coast as our frontiers.<sup>1</sup>

possible Fleet which the enemy may bring to bear. In such a case, and in such a case alone, a territorial attack might safely be attempted. This mode of operation, would, however, not be possible against Great Britain, except by a combination between the other maritime Powers, until after the British Navy had suffered a decisive reverse."

As to the lessons of the Spanish-American War in this connection see *Our Ships, Colonies and Commerce in Time of War*, by Sir John Colomb. (London : P. S. King & Son), p. 40 ; and for the lessons of the Russo-Japanese War, the reader should consult *Naval Strategy*, by Capt. (now Admiral) A. T. Mahan (London : Sampson Low, Marston & Co.), Chapters xiii and xiv.

<sup>1</sup> Col. Sir George S. Clarke and Mr. James R. Thursfield, writing in their book *The Navy and the Nation*, give expression to the following : "The command of the sea, is, in fact, to England in time of war what the inviolability of its frontier is to a continental Power. The loss of it is to all intents and purposes what invasion is to a continental Power. The fear of actual invasion is a pure chimera so long as our Fleets are able to protect us. No writer who has ever tried to conjure with it has been able to make his reasoning even plausible without assuming to begin with that our Fleets have either been annihilated or wafted into space—'decoyed away' is

In this connexion it is well to pause for a moment to record the fact that a good deal of controversy has taken place amongst eminent naval writers as to the doctrine of a "Fleet in Being" as applied to operations in naval war. In a work of this kind, it is, obviously, impossible to enter into the matter more than to say that a Commander who undertakes a military expedition oversea must first obtain a free sea in order to transport his troops, and this can only be done by defeating, masking, or keeping at a distance "any hostile force which is strong enough, if left to itself, to interfere with his movements."

The doctrine of a "Fleet in Being," so far as it is possible to make any general statement at all, has been well defined by Mr. James R. Thursfield as "a Fleet strategically at large, not itself in command of the sea, but strong enough to deny that command to its adversary by strategic and

the favourite expression based on a perverse misunderstanding of Nelson's pursuit of Villeneuve. On the other hand, the destruction of our Fleets would certainly render invasion possible, but would also render it superfluous." See p. 54, *The Navy and the Nation* (London: John Murray). For a treatment of the above-mentioned operations between Nelson and Villeneuve, see Chapter xvi of *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire*, by Admiral A. T. Mahan (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co.).

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tactical dispositions adapted to the circumstances of the case.”<sup>1</sup>

To revert to the speech of Sir John Colomb of March, 1896, it is to be observed that he emphasized once again the importance of the House being able to review matters of military and naval policy together, and in making reference to the new Cabinet Committee of Defence pointed out that this Committee was independent of the House of Commons, for the House could not review the work of the Committee. Again, referring to the want of mobility in our Army, he considered that the 37,000 trained and seasoned soldiers, locked up in Colonial garrisons, should be realized for oversea purposes in war, and that we should adopt a means to readily replace them. This he wished to see done by making the Militia an Imperial force, liable for service in Imperial garrison work, while the Volunteers should not only serve in Great Britain but in Ireland as well.

It was in pursuance of his desire to see waste and confusion avoided by a scientific regard for the proper functions of the Navy and the Army in relation to each other, that Sir John Colomb always argued in favour of garrisoning our naval

<sup>1</sup> *Nelson and other Naval Studies*, by J. R. Thursfield (London: John Murray). The doctrine of the “Fleet in Being” as originated by Torrington after the battle of Beachy Head,



bases with Royal Marine Forces and putting those places under the control of the Admiralty instead of the War Office. In a speech delivered on March 5, 1897, in the House of Commons, he complained that the defence of these bases was treated as a purely military question, whereas the developments of modern naval warfare made such defence more and more aquatic. He argued that the utility of a port was for the security of ships and that the defence of the naval bases involved not merely the defence of the mouth of the port, but of the area round the port, which was a naval question. He maintained that dual control was dangerous and dual administration mischievous, and showed

and developed by Admiral Colomb, was treated by Mr. J. R. Thursfield as "worthy of all acceptance." (Cf. Admiral Colomb's essay upon "The Naval Defence of the United Kingdom," in his *Essays on Naval Defence*, London: W. H. Allen & Co.). The views of Admiral A. T. Mahan on this head are given in his work *Naval Strategy*, where he discusses (p. 428) the theory of what he terms the "Fleet in Being School" relating to the paralyzing effect of an *inferior* Fleet. Admiral Mahan writes: "It is now more than fifteen years since I read Colomb's *Naval Warfare*. It, therefore, is not fresh in my mind; but, in referring to it for this occasion, I found among the leaves this Memorandum then made: 'It appears to me that Colomb advocates too exclusively the abandonment of a combined expedition upon the mere threat of a naval force—not necessarily superior—but even equal or smaller.'" See *Naval Strategy*, p. 430.

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that the effect on the Army of breaking up battalions, in order to garrison these bases, was to destroy efficiency for work in the field. On the other hand, he argued that Marines stationed at various naval bases could spend part of their time on shore and part of their time at sea (in the latter case being relieved by regular troops, or, better still, Militia, home and Colonial) and in a war upon the seas they would continue to meet the requirements which history had shown to be so essential, viz. the provision a mobile military force at the disposal of the Admirals in order to seize and hold positions necessary to maritime operations.

In a letter<sup>1</sup> to the Duke of Devonshire, in his capacity of President of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, Sir John Colomb developed the proposal to transfer the local protection of ports abroad (not the great Naval Arsenals at ports at home) to the Admiralty, and in showing the disadvantage of dual control of the War Office and Admiralty at naval bases he instanced the Pacific Station of Esquimalt, where the force of Royal Marine Artillery was under the command of the General commanding at Halifax on the Atlantic, over 3,000 miles away. To pursue this

<sup>1</sup> Published afterwards as *Army Organization in relation to Naval Necessities*, 1898 (London : P. S. King & Son).

subject further, however, would involve entering into technicalities which, in a work dealing with general principles, it is desirable to avoid ; but enough, it is hoped, has been said to show that one of the main principles underlying the proposal to transfer the protection of naval bases to the jurisdiction of the Admiralty was to increase the mobility of military forces.

In support of the same principle, but for different reasons, Sir John Colomb made a strong protest in the House of Commons<sup>1</sup> against War Office expenditure in connexion with the Military Works Bill of 1899. The Bill was for £4,000,000, of which £3,000,000 was for barracks and £1,000,000 for what was called Defence Works. He showed that though in 1888 the Inspector General of Fortifications had estimated the cost of putting the whole of the barrack accommodation throughout the Empire on a proper footing at from £4,000,000 to £5,000,000, the War Office had, in fact, since then spent £10,439,000 on barracks and was now asking for £3,000,000, with the prospect of another £2,594,000, to follow shortly. This was another step in the policy of 1872, and showed that the War Office had no continuous policy in the distribution of troops, while

<sup>1</sup> See *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, July 6, 1899,



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it illustrated the false system of putting gigantic building works into the hands of the Royal Engineers. He criticized the expenditure of £130,000 for permanent barracks at Wei-hai-wei, and in protesting against money being spent on defence works at that place<sup>1</sup> he showed that nothing would be gained except the locking up of more troops in garrisons. He asserted once more that "both on the land and at our ports we are, except in India, endeavouring to fulfil at enormous cost the military rôle of an inferior Naval Power. The two things are incompatible, and simply spell

<sup>1</sup> See *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, July 6, 1889.

In this able speech Sir John Colomb gave the history of the occupation of Port Hamilton in the face of naval opinion that it was not a desirable place to hold. As regards the history of the occupation of Wei-hai-wei, this place was first heard of in April 1888. There was no naval survey of the place until June 1898, though the Royal Engineers had prepared a military survey for the defence of the port not navally surveyed. The idea of embarking on permanent expenditure at Wei-hai-wei could not withstand the repeated onslaughts of Sir John Colomb, and, though the War Office spent money with the object of making it a secondary naval base, the Admiralty refused to adopt it as such. It was some time, however, before the War Office would consent to abandon their expenditure of £20,000 a year on maintaining a regiment there. In announcing the Government's eventual decision to disband this regiment on March 8, 1906, Mr. Haldane, as Secretary for War, stated, "Wei-hai-wei was originally a naval base; now I believe it is a watering-place."

military waste and weakness, and we are drifting on with an ever-increasing military expenditure on garrisons and an ever decreasing Army available for field service."

The real truth of the principles for the recognition of which in practical policy Sir John Colomb had been strenuously working all these years, was made manifest in two striking directions by the War in South Africa—firstly, the want of a mobile military force fully prepared for despatch oversea, and secondly, the vital necessity of the command of the sea to enable a military war to be carried on in one of the oversea territories of the Empire.

The naval lessons of the War were shortly summed up by Sir John Colomb in 1900,<sup>1</sup> when he said:—"In the prosecution of that War we have arrayed against us the declared ill-will of all the maritime Powers except America. But no one is the least uneasy; nowhere is it thought that the animosity displayed by the foreign Press will go beyond empty words. . . . We may well ask why we are so calm, so unhaunted by apprehension. It is the possession of a powerful Fleet, believed by us and by foreign Powers to be adequate to preventing any attempt to contest

<sup>1</sup> "The Navy and the War," published in the *Naval and Military Record* and other papers in February, 1900.

its power. . . . The grand lesson taught by the present War is the supreme power of moral effect exercised by a Fleet 'in being.' ”<sup>1</sup>

But as regards the provision by the War Office of a mobile military force for service oversea, it was pointed out by Sir John Colomb that the War in South Africa “shocked the Department into a lucid interval.”<sup>2</sup> As a result, Mr. Brodrick, taking perhaps to heart not only the lessons of the War but the repeated warnings of Sir John Colomb, went down to the House of Commons and precisely reversed his speech of 1896,<sup>3</sup> when he had asserted that the War Office put Home Defence in the front rank and considered as subsidiary to it the question of sending forces abroad. In introducing the Army Estimates of 1901,<sup>4</sup> Mr. Brodrick stated :—

“I think the events of the last fifteen months have proved first of all that we must be prepared to send more than two Army corps abroad ; secondly, that these Army corps must be better organized ; and thirdly, that, when you have parted

<sup>1</sup> The words “in being” are here used in the general sense.

<sup>2</sup> *British Dangers*, by Sir John Colomb (London : Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1902).

<sup>3</sup> See p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, March 8, 1901, p. 1057.



with the force which it is necessary to send out of the Kingdom, you must have a sufficient organization at home for our own protection."

Having realized the order of importance for military preparation in any scheme for the Defence of the Empire, Mr. Brodrick proposed that besides Home Defence "we ought to be ready at any moment to send abroad three Army corps with the proper cavalry divisions, in fact, a force of 120,000 men," and his proposal contemplated holding that force in readiness and "still providing ourselves with power to defend ourselves at home when that force had gone."<sup>1</sup>

While welcoming the reversal of "the order of two great features of recent military policy" by putting first the necessity of having 120,000 men ready at any moment for service oversea,<sup>2</sup> Sir John Colomb soon discovered that the policy was being whittled away, and after showing how

<sup>1</sup> Though this speech was a decided improvement upon the same Minister's speech of 1895, so far as it evidenced some acceptance of the doctrine of a striking force as a first essential in British Defence, it is to be observed that in this speech Mr. Brodrick showed his incapacity to assimilate general principles by putting forward the astounding argument that when considering the Army in relation to home defence, Members should not "confuse their minds" by thinking about the Navy.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, May 14, 1901.

the War Office had failed in South Africa by putting oversea service in the background of policy,<sup>1</sup> he protested that by the Resolution then before the House they were asked to vote more staff and more buildings "to prop up a military superstructure on rotten foundations. Because," he went on, "in South Africa, 6,000 miles away, the Army failed in mobility, we are asked by this Resolution for more men to lock up at home. Because we suffered, and suffered terribly, in South Africa from insufficient cavalry and field artillery, we are coolly asked for more money to spend on staff and buildings for the defence of London." He traced the "root cause of the mischief" to the policy of 1871, and asserted that the War Office "sticking to this German policy still keeps invasion in the forefront and everything else in the background." Thus we had the Admiralty spending £31,000,000 to secure the safety of the sea, and a large part of the £29,000,000 for the Army to be spent by the War Office because that Department "thinks the Admiralty cannot accomplish that purpose."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Five years later, Mr. Haldane, speaking as Secretary of State for War, with the lessons before him which an earnest study of the military events of the past few years had taught, was able to justify, if indeed any justification were needed, the attitude of Sir John Colomb. "In 1901," the

Amongst those who were in constant communication with Sir John Colomb at this time was Colonel Sir George Sydenham Clarke, R.E.,<sup>1</sup> who, though himself a well-recognized authority on Defence, to the study of which he had devoted the best years of his life, was ever ready to acknowledge the indebtedness of all thinkers to the pioneer teaching of Sir John Colomb. As secretary to the Hartington Commission<sup>2</sup> and the Colonial

War Secretary declared, "we ought to have known something about the Blue Water principles and the power of the Navy to defend our shores. We ought to have separated the notion of a striking force for defending the Empire abroad from the notion of home defence. Yet there was an organized plan which apparently owed its origin to German models and under which home defence and foreign necessities were mixed up together, with the result that there was one huge Army projected which was to unite in itself the functions of that home defence which even at that time were seen to be unnecessary. The result was a scheme, which, if carried out, would have brought the Army Estimates up to £40,000,000. But, fortunately, in this event, with the aid of the new policy of the Rt. Hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Arnold-Forster) and the work of the Esher Commission, all that was cut down, and the worst of it remains in the Barracks of Tidworth which represent the outcome of the policy."

<sup>1</sup> Now Governor of Bombay. Sir George Clarke has just been raised to the Peerage (January, 1913), and the present writer understands that he will henceforth be known by the title of Lord Sydenham.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 28.





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Defence Committee, Sir George Clarke had already done valuable practical work, but he was destined to accomplish a great deal more in the way of defence organization when he became later a member of Lord Esher's famous Committee of three which was appointed to "re-constitute" the War Office. The view, therefore, of Sir George Clarke, when writing to Sir John Colomb upon the War Office schemes of 1901, is of special interest as given in the following letter:—

"13, GLEDHOW GARDENS,  
SOUTH KENSINGTON, S.W.

*August 11, 1901.*

"MY DEAR SIR JOHN,— . . . I despair of seeing a definite policy adopted here. Ministers do not seem to have time to study any great question, and our defence measures are a sort of compromise which results only in great waste and general weakness.

"The Army Scheme and all it involves are appalling to my mind. It falls between two stools. It will not increase our powers of offence; it will not give us a home army worthy of the name; it will entail Army Estimates up to £30,000,000, which are not needed if there was a clear and definite policy recognizing the functions of the Navy. . . .

Yours sincerely,

G. S. CLARKE."

In entering into details as to military invasion in his speech of May 14, 1901, Sir John showed the difference between the theories of the War Office and the Admiralty, and in discussing transport he was called to order by the Speaker, thus showing once again, and perhaps more clearly than before, how impossible it was by the Rules of the House to discuss Army Policy in relation to the Navy.

Sir John considered that the Volunteer force was more than sufficient in number, if adequately organized and made reasonably efficient, to perform all the military defensive duties in the United Kingdom in time of war under conditions of sea supremacy. By such means he wished to see the Militia released from obligations at home and able to discharge Imperial duties abroad, thus freeing the Regular Army for general service. Instead of this, however, the War Office brought into existence a new force of 35,000 mounted men "to resist invasion at five shillings a day—the force to be called 'Yeoman' to please the British public at home, and 'Imperial' to amuse the British people abroad."<sup>1</sup> Sir John Colomb, however, saw a symptom of improvement by the subsequent offer of £5 a year to the "Imperial Yeo-

<sup>1</sup> *British Dangers*, p. 7.

man" to become "Imperial" by voluntarily agreeing to let the War Office off the contract which precluded his liability to Imperial Service.

With all the lessons of the war clearly before him, Sir John Colomb was thoroughly impatient at the War Office theories of 1901, and disgusted that the Defence Committee of the Cabinet was showing itself of little service in applying general principles. Indeed, he went so far as to describe the Committee as a "pious political imposture without any control over the War Office"<sup>1</sup> and stated his fears for the future as founded upon

<sup>1</sup> In this connexion it is interesting to note the opinion of the late Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, M.P., who described himself as "a very humble pupil" of Sir John Colomb, "who had sat at his feet, so to speak, in the matter of naval policy for a very long time" (see Report of proceedings at a Meeting of Junior Constitutional Club on February 16, 1899, when Sir John Colomb delivered a Lecture, "The Navy in relation to the Empire"). Writing before he took office as Secretary of State for War, Mr. Arnold-Forster referred to the Cabinet Committee of Defence as follows:—"It is ill to speak evil of dignities, but it is not possible to take this particular institution seriously. It is a joke, and a very bad one. . . . As a means of communication between the Executive Government and the naval and military authorities, it has its place in a constitutional country, but as a substitute for the General Staff, as a body really capable of organizing the defence of this country, it is a grotesque imposture." See *The War Office, the Army, and the Empire*, by H. O. Arnold-Forster, M.P. (London: Cassell & Co.), pp. 75-76.



the modern tendency which loved "tinkering with details and imagining that they are principles," and which failed "to grasp and apply the eternal principles of war to the Empire as one great concrete whole."

Nearly two years, however, elapsed before anything definite was done to bring about some co-ordination between Navy and Army administration upon a definite constitutional basis. On March 5, 1903, the Prime Minister (Mr. A. J. Balfour), made perhaps the most epoch-making statement in the history of the relations of the two great Services when he outlined the scheme for reconstituting the then Defence Committee of the Cabinet as a real Committee of Imperial Defence. Hitherto, the Committee had been purely a Committee of the Cabinet, and as such kept no records and admitted to its council no outsiders. In the freshly constituted Committee certain experts would be upon it as members, and not called to its deliberations merely as witnesses, and further than that the conclusions of the Committee would be embodied not only in resolutions but in reasoned documents for the information of the Cabinet, both at the time, and at a later period, and also for the information of their successors in Office. Mr. Balfour defended this method for various reasons, but not least because

when differences of opinion existed between experts in either Department it would be most important that, when the differences showed themselves, the grounds on which the former decision was arrived at "should be there in a simple, easily intelligible, easily accessible form."

As regards the actual constitution of the Committee, Mr. Balfour considered that while there should be a fixed and permanent nucleus, that nucleus should not be too large. He therefore proposed it should be as follows:—"Cabinet Members: The Lord President, the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for War, and the First Lord of the Admiralty; non-Cabinet Members: The First Sea Lord, the Commander-in-Chief, the Head of the Naval Intelligence, and the Head of the Military Intelligence. He did not mean to exclude other members who might for any particular reason be required; and he thought that as decisions arrived at would be by the help of members of the Cabinet, they would receive a support which they never could receive if simply "thrown at the heads of the Cabinet from outside." It would be difficult to find, in the speech of any responsible Minister, a more complete vindication of the attitude so long adopted by Sir John Colomb (unless, indeed, it were Mr. Balfour's subsequent speech of May 11,

1905),<sup>1</sup> more especially when he said that he entirely agreed with those critics of our old system, that it was a very faulty system “in which the Navy decided its own affairs without consulting the Army, and the Army decided its own affairs without reference to the Navy.”

It will perhaps never be possible to estimate exactly how far Sir John Colomb directly and indirectly influenced the re-constitution of the Committee of Imperial Defence. There is, however, no doubt that at this time he was in constant private communication with the Prime Minister, and was to a large extent responsible for the increasing interest which Mr. Balfour showed in the study of the higher policy of defence. His friend, Sir George Clarke, watching events from his new position as Governor of Victoria, wrote regularly, and in the following letter foreshadowed something of the work he was himself to do upon the Esher Committee:—

“STATE GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
MELBOURNE,

*May 5, 1903.*

“MY DEAR COLOMB,— . . . I think you have gained much if you have permanently interested Mr. Balfour in the question of National Defence,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 65.



with which we have been playing fast and loose to a very dangerous extent.

“To have a constituted Council is a great point gained ; but without a few permanent officials—and records—it will not do what we hope and expect.

“I would greatly like to have the chance of bringing order out of present chaos and especially of tackling the organization of our military forces so as to bring it into harmony with the big principles for which we have contended.

“The cost of the so-called Army Scheme must crush it, even if it did not violate all principles. Retrenchment will, sooner or later, be demanded, and I have always contended that £23,000,000 should be an ample provision. There is much waste at the Admiralty, but at least we get an effective Fleet. We have not got an effective Army, and we can never have on the lines at present followed. . . .

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

G. S. CLARKE.”

The speech of Mr. Balfour was welcomed by Sir John Colomb in public, and, in referring to unnecessary expenditure incurred through lack of consultation between the Services, he said :

"In my humble judgment, the step that has been taken is the most important one that has yet been taken in the interests of economy." Sir John went on to say that he hoped to see the Committee form the germ of a Council in which the contributing countries of the Empire should have a place,—that was, of course, when the Colonies took their share in the cost of Imperial defence. Considerable progress was subsequently made in the direction of taking the self-governing Dominions into closer consultation on defence through the medium of the Committee, and this was foreshadowed by Mr. A. J. Balfour in his masterly speech of May 11, 1905, when he said: "as time goes on, our Colonies will share our discussions on those aspects of Imperial Defence in which they are specially concerned." But before considering the Committee from the standpoint of the Closer Union of the Empire, or even before discussing with any attempt at adequacy the 1905 speech of Mr. Balfour, to which reference has just been made, a little attention must be given to events taking place at the War Office as a result of the Report of the Royal Commission upon the War in South Africa and other Reports.

By the autumn of 1903, two strong reasons were in existence for an early and effective handling of "Army Reform." These were the publica-

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tion of the Report of the War Commission and the failure of the system of three years enlistment.<sup>1</sup> The next year saw two further Reports, one on January 11, 1904, by the War Office Reconstitution Committee (generally called the Esher Committee) and the other by the Duke of Norfolk's Commission on the Militia and Volunteers. While the latter declared both branches of the Auxiliary Forces to be unfit for war, the former dealt with both the reconstitution of the War Office and the Defence Committee.

Having observed that the War Office had been administered for many years from the point of view of peace, the Esher Committee recommended a "complete breach with the past," and made several drastic recommendations "with a single eye to the effective training and preparation of the Military Forces of the Crown for war."<sup>2</sup> Referring to the War Commission, the Committee remarked "the evidence taken by the Royal Com-

<sup>1</sup> Any attempt at a detailed examination into Army Policy is beyond the scope of this work, but for further information on this head the reader is referred to *The Army in 1906*, by the late Rt. Hon. H. O. Arnold-Forster, M.P., ex-Secretary of State for War (London: John Murray, 1906), and also to *Military Needs and Military Policy*, by the same author (London: Smith Elder & Co, 1909).

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the War Office Reconstitution Committee*, Part I, 1904 (Cd. 1932).



mission proves that the Cabinet had in 1899 no adequate means of obtaining reasoned opinions on which to base a war policy," and believing that the re-constituted Defence Committee was all important in this connexion, the Esher Committee advocated further development. In urging the need of a permanent nucleus of the Defence Committee, it was stated that this should consist of a permanent secretary and under this official, two naval, two military, and two Indian officers, with, if possible, one or more representatives of the Colonies ; and the duties should be to consider all questions of Imperial Defence from the point of view of the Navy, the Military Forces, India and the Colonies, and to obtain and collate information, prepare documents required by the Committee, furnish advice to the Committee, and keep records.

As already mentioned, a prominent Member of Lord Esher's Committee of three was Sir George Sydenham Clarke,<sup>1</sup> and as this distinguished soldier had been secretary of the Hartington Commission, which recommended the establishment of a Council of Defence,<sup>2</sup> an additional interest is lent to the following passage from the Report of the Reconstitution Committee concern-

<sup>1</sup> The other Member was Admiral Sir John Fisher.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 30.

ing War Office Reform, which expresses itself in words almost identical with those used many times by Sir John Colomb, viz.: "when in 1890 the Hartington Commission urged a drastic measure of reorganization, nothing was done. It has followed that the War Office has been subjected to successive tinkering processes, by which improvement in minor matters may occasionally have been accomplished, but which left great principles entirely out of sight."

As Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster was the Minister appointed at the War Office to carry out the Reforms, it is useful to note his estimate of the situation at the time under consideration, more especially as this affords a recognition of the practical success of the campaign initiated and carried on for so many years by Sir John Colomb. "It had long been apparent," wrote Mr. Arnold-Forster, "to many students of our military problem that a system which was based upon the hypothesis of liability to an invasion in force of these islands, and which practically ignored the supremacy of the British Navy, had ceased to be suitable to the needs of the British Empire. The views which had long been entertained by a few were now about to become the recognized creed of the many. The so-called 'Blue Water School' had fought hard for recognition; that recognition

was now afforded in the most authoritative manner. In 1904 the Committee of Imperial Defence was reconstituted on a fresh basis by the Prime Minister. From that date the Committee sat practically every week.”<sup>1</sup>

The actual results of the first few months of the Committee's work were given to the world in a speech of great importance delivered in the House of Commons on May 11th, 1905, by the Prime Minister (Mr. A. J. Balfour), when he dealt exhaustively with the question of the relations of the Navy and the Army in regard to the Invasion of England.

It is first to be noted that the occasion of this speech was in itself most significant, for it was made upon the vote (Civil Service Estimates) for the Treasury and Subordinate Departments, which involved the cost of the Committee of Imperial Defence; and this vote provided the opportunity, so long urged as a necessity by Sir John Colomb, for the consideration in the House of Commons of joint matters of naval and military concern. That such joint consideration, in a scientific manner, could only result in one way, Sir John Colomb never doubted, and students of the larger aspects of British Defence noted with real pleasure that this speech of Mr. Balfour was an official endorse-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Army in 1906*.



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ment both as regards principles and, to a large extent, data, of the speech which Sir John Colomb delivered in the House of Commons on March 13, 1896.<sup>1</sup>

Having observed that the Committee of Defence was not an executive but a consultative body, and that its functions were extra-departmental, as being concerned with the great problems of defence which lie beyond the province of any single department and require the co-operation either of two or more Offices at Whitehall or of the British and a Colonial Government, Mr. Balfour proceeded to examine, in the most exhaustive manner yet attempted publicly by a Minister of the Crown, the conditions governing Home Defence and the Invasion of England. He pointed out that since the time of Drake great generals and admirals had differed in opinion as to the possibility of invasion ; and stated that, in reviewing the position, the Committee had based their calculations on suppositions most unfavourable to this country, viz., the assumption that our Regular Army was abroad upon some oversea expedition and that the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Channel Fleets were too far away to take any part in repelling invasion—though, of course, constituting a menace to the communi-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 38.

cations of any invader effecting a landing. There would still remain, he showed, under the new Admiralty system, ready for sea within six hours' notice, 6 first-class battleships, and 6 first-class cruisers in reserve. In addition there would be in commission 12 cruisers, 11 torpedo gunboats, 24 destroyers, and 20 torpedo boats stationed in home waters; and in reserve, with nucleus crews ready for rapid action, 6 first-class battleships, 19 cruisers, 58 destroyers, and 28 torpedo-boats. That being the naval position with the Fleets abroad and the Army absent, Mr. Balfour asked what was the smallest number of men with which invasion could be attempted. Lord Roberts' opinion was that it would not be possible to make this attempt with less than 70,000 men.

After referring to the fact that steam and telegraphy enabled concentration of warships to take place far more quickly than in the days when Napoleon contemplated the invasion of England, the Prime Minister discussed the problem of transporting the 70,000 men to England. He took France as the potential invader and asked if the transport was to be accomplished by long and open preparation. If so, then the hypothesis of our absent Fleets would not be practical, and, if not, then the effort must be sudden. Taking the Channel and Atlantic ports of France, he

estimated that not more than 100,000 tons of French shipping could be collected, and this would be absolutely insufficient to carry 70,000 men. For such a force, the Admiralty considered 280,000 tons necessary ; but in any event the steam tonnage of France in the ports mentioned was wholly insufficient. Granted, however, that the transport was procured, what harbour would be chosen ? Cherbourg would be too exposed for operations to be carried on in secrecy, while it would be impossible to transport all the 70,000 men from Brest during the daylight. No convoy could escape torpedo attack in the darkness, and long before they reached our shores the alarm would have spread from the Faroe Islands to Gibraltar, and every ship available, cruiser, destroyer, gunboat, down to the smallest craft, would be concentrated at the menaced shore. Any attempt to embark the expeditionary force from separate ports would scatter the transport along the whole North Coast of France and would increase the danger of being dealt with by British destroyers and cruisers " whose speed would enable them to concentrate on any division of the slow moving convoy which seemed least efficiently protected." <sup>1</sup> Assuming, however, that the huge convoy had

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the original Memorandum laid before the Defence Committee.



escaped attack on the voyage, it would take at least forty-eight hours in calm weather to disembark 70,000 men on a coast such as that between Plymouth and Dover. The submarine and the destroyer would thus have opportunities during two days and two nights, though it would be surely impossible for this "helpless mass of transports" to escape attacks of the coast-defence vessels, even if unsupported by battle-ships, cruisers, and other craft always in our ports. "No British Admiral," said Mr. Balfour, "would regard the convoying of vessels carrying 70,000 men across at least seventy-five miles of sea, and their subsequent protection for two days and two nights in positions not only fixed, but perfectly ascertained, in waters swarming with torpedo craft and submarines, as other than the enterprise of a lunatic. And what a British Admiral would regard as insane is scarcely likely to be considered as practicable by sailors of other nations."

This important speech may be said to have opened a new era in defensive policy, and Sir John Colomb could look upon it with pride as, in a sense, the crowning point of his arduous labours since 1867 for the recognition of sound principles of naval and military policy in relation to the defence of Britain and her maritime Em-



pire. While it is true that Mr. Balfour, in his speech, did not emphasize in the way that Sir John Colomb had done (in dealing with the Invasion of England) the essential doctrine of the command of the sea,<sup>1</sup> yet he accepted the position the great War Office critic had so long taken up to such an extent that when commenting in the House upon the Premier's speech, Sir John was able to say: "It was most interesting to hear the Rt. Hon. gentleman's speech dealing with invasion, because the arguments used there were just those which he in opposition to the War Office theories had used so often in respect to that very question." Recognizing that the Committee of Imperial Defence had done much to bring about the altered state of official opinion, Sir John Colomb remarked: "It was an enormous gain when they found a body set up to judicially examine naval and military opinion, and to deter-

<sup>1</sup> For an extremely clear and easily understood exposition of the nature of sea power, the reader cannot do better than consult Mr. Spenser Wilkinson's little book entitled *The Command of the Sea* (London: Constable & Co., 1894). In the course of his treatise this well-known authority gives expression to the following: "The British Empire is, for the purpose of a war with any Power except Russia or the United States, equivalent to a number of islands scattered over the oceans. All these islands can be kept at perpetual peace by the systematic use of a strong Navy."

mine on principles of high policy; a body on which experts were to be heard and statesmen were to be the assessors and the judges. . . . He rejoiced to have lived to hear an explicit statement from a Prime Minister upon principles of policy giving clear and distinct reasons why those principles should be followed."

Amongst those in the House who listened to the Debate were Sir George Sydenham Clarke, who wrote the next day to Sir John Colomb as follows :—

" COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE,  
2, WHITEHALL GARDENS, S.W.

May 13, 1905.

"MY DEAR COLOMB,—I listened to you with the greatest pleasure on Thursday, and I knew how delighted you would be to find one of your aims accomplished.

"For the first time, a Prime Minister of this country laid down sound principles of *national* defence, and none of his predecessors could have discharged this duty so brilliantly as Mr. Balfour. You have laboured to make this possible, and it has been achieved. Whether it will last we cannot tell. But when the General Election comes, you will be able to sing "Nunc dimittis" with the consciousness of achievement.



“Could you suggest the speech being revised for publication ?<sup>1</sup> I think this should be done.

“I hope two things may be said to be now established :—

“(1) That in a special and peculiar sense the Prime Minister of this country is charged with the responsibility for its defence.

“(2) That to enable him to discharge this grave responsibility he must have his own Defence Bureau.

“Was not the Esher Committee right in putting this in the forefront of their recommendations ?

“With warm congratulations on the success of your efforts,

I am, ever yours sincerely,

G. S. CLARKE.”

The abandonment of false doctrine at the War Office was further assured by the appointment of Sir John Colomb's life-long friend and loyal helper, Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, as Secretary of State for War, in order to carry out the reforms at the War Office foreshadowed by the Report of the Esher Committee. The old theories of “passive defence” and of locking up

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Colomb suggested this subsequently in the House of Commons and the speech was revised very carefully and published by Longmans Green & Co. in August 1905.

troops in this country behind fortifications were now definitely abandoned, and Mr. Arnold-Forster clearly stated his policy as based on the theory "that we do want a large Army for service overseas; that a large part of that Army should not be mobilized except in time of war; that we do not want a large Army for the defence of the United Kingdom in time of war."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Arnold-Forster recognized as clearly as Sir John Colomb had ever done in the past that "it is because we will persist in discussing the Army as if it had no connexion with the Navy that so many of our mistakes have been made";<sup>2</sup> and therefore it was with sincere pleasure and gratification that Sir John saw in active and strenuous work at the War Office his former colleague, or, to use Mr. Arnold-Forster's own words, his "humble pupil." Indeed, in one of the last speeches made by him in the House of Commons<sup>3</sup> he was able, for the first time, whole-heartedly to support the War Office representative's enunciation of general principles when, in referring to Mr. Arnold-Forster's speech, he said:—"There has been a

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, August 8, 1904, p. 1385.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, February 23, 1905, p. 1177.

<sup>3</sup> See *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, March 29, 1905.

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total reversal of the principle upon which, for some fifty years, our Army Policy has been founded. It was not a new departure, but a return to the old policy by which the Empire was made—the doctrine of a free sea, with a free Army, with its corollary that the low-water mark of the enemy's coast and not our own coast was our frontier."

Though Mr. Arnold-Forster was not destined to remain long at the War Office, he was succeeded by one of the ablest thinkers amongst the opposing party on the accession to Office of the Liberals in 1905. Mr. (now Lord) Haldane's acceptance of the Secretaryship of State for War was welcomed by Mr. Arnold-Forster himself,<sup>1</sup> and while it is true that he was forced to criticize much of Lord Haldane's subsequent policy,<sup>2</sup> he always recognized with Sir John Colomb that the new War Secretary had based his schemes on sound principles so far as the relations of the Navy and the Army were concerned.

In introducing the Army Estimates on March 8, 1906, Mr. Haldane called attention to the need of a striking force<sup>3</sup> as follows:—

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of H. O. Arnold-Forster*, by his wife (London: Edward Arnold), p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Army in 1906, Military Needs and Military Policy*, and *Memoir of H. O. Arnold-Forster*, p. 365.

<sup>3</sup> In view of the observation as to Mr. Arnold-



“It must be remembered that this country is in quite a different position from that of any foreign nation. If Germany or France go to war, they have conscription, and they are in this position—that in time of peace they must keep up a vast military organization. They have only one war to contemplate on a large scale, and that is with their neighbours across the border. . . . But the British Army is not like that. We live on an island, and our coasts are completely defended by the Fleet. Our Army is wanted for purposes abroad and overseas. . . . This island is the centre of an Empire consisting of nearly twelve million square miles, and including some four hundred millions of population, and we have to protect the distant shores of that Empire from the attack of the invader. We want, therefore, an Army which is very mobile and capable of rapid transport.”

And later on Mr. Haldane accepted Mr. Balfour's estimate of 70,000 men as the force which the Navy could be sure of intercepting.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee of Imperial Defence continued Forster's acceptance of Mr. Haldane's principles, it should be stated that Mr. Arnold-Forster did not believe that the policy of the Liberal Minister would produce the striking force required. See p. 212 *et seq.*, *Military Needs and Military Policy*.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, March 8, 1909.

to be of great importance to the new Ministry in framing their defensive measures, and on August 2, 1906, an interesting discussion took place in the House of Commons which was initiated by Colonel Seely (now Secretary of State for War), who argued in favour of making the Committee non-party by having representatives upon it of the party not then in power, as well as the Government representatives and the experts. As this discussion, however, mainly had reference to the relations of the Colonies to the Committee, the subject will be more appropriately treated in Chapter V, and, meantime, it is well to glance at a very important event which occurred on November 23, 1908.

On the date mentioned, Lord Roberts brought forward a motion in the House of Lords to the effect that the defence of these islands necessitated the possession of an Army so strong in numbers and so efficient in quality that the most formidable foreign nation would hesitate to attempt a landing on these shores, and the Resolution went on to affirm that it was desirable, in view of altered strategical conditions in the North Sea, that the Government should make a statement on the invasion problem, and state definitely the conclusions arrived at as the result of the recent inquiry by the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Lord Roberts complained that in his 1905 speech Mr. Balfour had only considered France as a possible invader, whereas he (Lord Roberts) had calculated that vessels, suitable for the accommodation of 100,000 men, were at all times available in the northern ports of Germany. He believed the men could be collected without fuss or mobilization, and that 150,000 men could be transported in the same number of vessels that Mr. Balfour had been informed would be needed for half that number of French. He thought that the embarkation and disembarkation would be shorter and that the transports might elude the Fleet.<sup>1</sup>

In this speech Lord Roberts gave expression

<sup>1</sup> The fact that Lord Roberts takes the view he does upon the possibilities of invasion is by no means conclusive, for soldiers equally as eminent as he have expressed similar opinions upon this matter, which is, as will have been seen, essentially a Naval question.

In referring to the controversy concerning the Invasion of England in which, since the time of Drake, the soldiers in the main had taken one side and the sailors the other, Mr. Balfour in his speech of May 11, 1905 (see p. 65) said: "It is certain, therefore, that Napoleon believed invasion to be possible; it is equally certain that Nelson believed it to be impossible. Forty years later you find the Duke of Wellington, in a very famous letter, expressing, in terms almost pathetic in their intensity, his fears of invasion, which naval opinion has never shared, provided our Fleets be adequate."



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to views similar to those which influenced the policy of the old War Office,<sup>1</sup> and which moreover undoubtedly formed the basis of his own campaign in favour of compulsory military training for Home Defence. Though himself a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1905, Lord Roberts did not agree with Mr. Balfour's speech on Invasion, and since his retirement from the position of Commander-in-Chief he has devoted himself, with his usual splendid patriotism, to the advocacy of compulsory military training, on the ground that a much stronger and more highly trained force than the Territorial Army is necessary for the defence of the shores of the United Kingdom. It is difficult to see on what doctrine of naval warfare this advocacy (and that of the National Service League) is based, for it might have been thought that the brothers Colomb, and the many eminent naval writers who have followed them, had sufficiently demonstrated that no Army confined to these shores,<sup>2</sup> however great it may be, can save this country from starvation, and the Empire from ruin, if the command of the sea is lost; while if such command is maintained, the Invasion of England is not a matter for serious consideration.<sup>3</sup> Compulsory military training for oversea

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 17, 37.      <sup>2</sup> See pp. 15, 15 n, 18.

<sup>3</sup> See also pp. 41, 42. Sir John Colomb always considered

service could undoubtedly be more easily defended from a naval standpoint, as the strength of the British striking Army may quite conceivably prove inadequate to bring a naval war with a great Power, or combination of Powers, to a conclusion. But the extension of the idea to this logical conclusion apparently finds no support, perhaps owing to the belief that it would meet with but scanty approval from the electorate.<sup>1</sup>

That the Government of the day were able to

that the advocates of compulsory service in this country had not sufficiently thought out for what purpose they wished to see the conscript Army created, or the cost of such an Army, and it is to be noted that the official estimate of the annual cost of a million home-keeping soldiers, trained for six months only, was stated by Mr. Haldane on December 14, 1908, to be £20,000,000. Sir John Colomb believed that the increased cost involved by conscription could not be maintained without reduction in the naval expenditure, and in this view he was supported by his friend Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, who wrote in 1909: "I do not myself believe that this country can or will bear the cost of an adequate Navy, an adequate Regular Army, and an efficient Conscript Army. I greatly fear that in the attempt to obtain these three objects, we may find ourselves left with an inadequate Navy, an insufficient Regular Army, and a totally inefficient and useless Conscript Army" (see *Military Needs and Military Policy*, pp. 155-156).

<sup>1</sup> It is fair to say, however, that Mr. L. S. Amery, M.P., has proposed that while service should be made compulsory only those men who engage to serve abroad in time of war should receive pay.

deal with the speech of so popular a military hero as Lord Roberts in the way they did in 1908, showed once more the value of having a joint Committee of the best naval and military opinion behind them. With this support Lord Crewe, replying to Lord Roberts for the Government, stated again the sound proposition, so constantly emphasized by Sir John Colomb, that "we do not abandon our reliance on the general power of the Navy to deal with invasion by a great force." He, however, agreed that a Home Army was necessary :—

- (1) To repel raids.<sup>1</sup>
- (2) To prevent a panic that might hamper the Admiralty in dealing with the Fleet.
- (3) To compel the enemy to come in great strength.

On July 29, 1909,<sup>2</sup> the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith), as President of the Committee of Imperial Defence, made an important statement on the work of the Committee, taking the same opportunity as that afforded to Mr. Balfour in 1905, when the Vote for the Staff of the Committee came up under the Civil Service Estimates.

<sup>1</sup> As to military preparations for the resistance of raids with special reference to the Territorial Forces, see *Military Needs and Military Policy*, Chapter xiv.

<sup>2</sup> See *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*.



In recognizing the value of its existence for seven years, Mr. Asquith said : " I regard it not only as a valuable, but as an indispensable part of our administrative organization," and in alluding to its functions, said : " It is the primary business of the Defence Committee to study and determine what is the best provision that can be made for the naval and military requirements of the Empire as a whole." As regards the members of the Committee, besides the four Secretaries of State (other than Home Secretary) the members were the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the First Sea Lord, the Director of Naval Intelligence, the Chief of the General Staff, while they had the co-operation of the Inspector General of the Forces (Sir John French), Lord Esher, and Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. Wilson.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Asquith expressed a

<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of the latest work of the Committee of Imperial Defence was given to the House of Commons by the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) on July 25, 1912. On that occasion Mr. Asquith stated that the full Committee did not meet more than six or seven times a year, and that a large part of its work was entrusted to sub-Committees. Of these there were four, viz. the Home Ports Defence Committee, the Oversea Defence Committee, the Committee for the Co-ordination of Departmental action on the outbreak of War and the Aerial Navigation Committee. Besides the above permanent sub-Committees, many sub-Committees have sat from time to time to deal with such matters as local and in-

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hope that they would be assisted by representatives of the Colonies.

In reference to Lord Roberts' speech, Mr. Asquith stated that his predecessor (Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman) recognized the gravity and importance of the matter, and appointed a sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, of which he (Mr. Asquith) was Chairman, to go into the whole matter in the light of Lord Roberts' representation and the previous statements of the late Prime Minister (Mr. Balfour). This sub-Committee, consisting of almost all the members of the Committee (all the expert members) carried on its investigations from November, 1907, to October, 1908, and had from Lord Roberts a full presentation of his case, and studied all changes in the situation.

In stating the conclusions of the Committee, Mr. Asquith said: "We took against ourselves the most unfavourable possible conditions and in favour of the hypothetical invader the most favourable conditions. The conclusion to which

ternal transportation and the distribution of supplies in time of war, with oversea transports and reinforcements in time of war, with wireless telegraphy throughout the Empire, and with Press Censorship in time of War, etc. For further references to the work of the Committee of Imperial Defence, see pages 57, 58, 66.

we unanimously arrived—all the naval as well as the military members of the Committee being at one in this matter—may be summed up under two heads. In the first place, that so long as the naval supremacy of this country is adequately assured, invasion on a large scale, by which I mean invasion on such a scale as was contemplated by Lord Roberts (that is, the transport to these shores of 120,000 to 150,000 men) is an absolutely impracticable operation.” On the other hand, the Committee agreed that if command of the sea were lost, then whatever might be the strength and organization of our military forces, even allowing the United Kingdom possessed an Army like Germany, the subjection of the country would be inevitable, and this might be brought about even without any invasion of these shores.

Secondly, as regards the Home Army, Mr. Asquith repeated the view of the Committee, as previously given by Lord Crewe,<sup>1</sup> that its numbers and organization should be sufficient to repel raids (i.e. expeditions so small in numbers as to evade the most carefully watching fleet and not intended permanently to occupy the country) and compel an enemy which contemplates invasion to come with such a substantial force as to make it impossible to evade the Fleet. He stated the Ad-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 80.



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miralty belief that a force of 70,000 men could not possibly evade the Fleet.

In this way the long struggle of Sir John Colomb for the recognition of sound principles was crowned with success; in this way were laid to rest<sup>1</sup> the exaggerated theories of invasion which ignored the doctrine of sea supremacy, and which had been responsible not only for wasting huge

<sup>1</sup> This statement is perhaps too sanguine, as eminent soldiers, looking at the question of the Invasion of England through military glasses, will inevitably from time to time endeavour to rouse public opinion to the necessity of establishing a great Army for Home Defence. As a matter of fact, Lord Roberts' attitude was entirely unaltered by the results of the investigations of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and he is now more than ever convinced of the truth of the position outlined in the motion he moved in the House of Lords on November 23, 1908. The position of the Committee of Imperial Defence remains the same to-day as when explained by Mr. Asquith in July, 1909, except that the possibility of an attempted invasion of these shores has been rendered still more remote by the large force of destroyers and submarines, which, as pointed out in the notes supplied by the Board of Admiralty to the War Office in November, 1910, will always form "a very effective second line of defence in the improbable event of such a second line being required." The naval line of defence is, therefore, now twofold, the first line consisting of the Fleet; the second of a separate coast-defence organization of submarine and destroyer flotillas. See *Compulsory Service*, by General Sir Ian Hamilton, p. 19, and Admiralty Notes given in Appendix to that volume (London: John Murray, 1911).

sums of money in the past, but for crippling the striking Army and preventing a sound basis of future co-operation with the Oversea States in defence of the common Empire.

It was, perhaps, fitting that the subject which of all others Sir John Colomb was never tired of investigating and exposing to the light of day should have been again so carefully studied by the Defence Committee and made public in the very year of his death, for he passed away on May 27, 1909. Thus it may be said that the most important chapter in the story of the evolution of Imperial Defence closed with the death of "the Pilot that weathered the storm."







**PROTECTION OF COMMERCE ;  
IMPERIAL CO-OPERATION, 1884-1902.**



## CHAPTER III

### PROTECTION OF COMMERCE ; IMPERIAL CO-OPERATION, 1884-1902.

*"The larger principle of the relations which self-governing Colonies should hold to the Imperial Naval Defence should first come under consideration, because that is the major premise of which the form of any contribution is after all only a minor matter."*—HON. ALFRED DEAKIN.<sup>1</sup>

The British Navy ; its Functions.—Protection of Territories —Protection of Commerce.—Royal Commission on Food Supply.—Admiralty views on Protection of Commerce.—Sir John Colomb on Protection of Commerce and Necessity of Colonial Co-operation.—Growth of Colonial Sea Commerce and Naval Responsibilities.—Formation of Imperial Federation League.—Basis of League's Policy.—Professor Seeley and Sir John Colomb on Federation for Defence.—Colonial Conference of 1887.—Lord Salisbury on Union for Defence.—Policy of Home Government at Conference.—Local aspects of Defence, and Carnarvon Commission.—Influence of Steam on Naval War.—Views of Sir Henry Holland and Sir John Colomb.—Australian Squadron.—Scheme of Admiral Tryon.—Agreement limiting action of Squadron.—Sir Henry Holland and Sir John Colomb thereon.—Defence of King George's Sound and Thursday Island.—Home Government's absence of Principle.—Australian Military Defence.—Proposals for Co-operation.—Sir A. Campbell

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<sup>1</sup> At 1907 Imperial Conference.



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on Canada's Part in Defence.—Mr. Hofmeyr's Suggestion for Defence Fund.—Deputation of Imperial Federation League to Lord Salisbury.—Appointment of Committee of League to draw up a Scheme.—Report of Committee.—Recognition that Colonies sharing in cost must share in control.—Suggestion of a Conference.—Presentation of Report to Mr. Gladstone.—Sir John Colomb on need for Common Consultation.—Mr. Gladstone on Scheme.—Dissolution of Imperial Federation League and reasons for same.—Formation of Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee.—Colonial Conference of 1897.—Mr. Joseph Chamberlain on Co-operation in Naval Defence.—Mr. Goschen on Responsibility of Admiralty.—Military Defence ; Uniformity of Arms and Interchange of Troops.—Cape Colony and Naval Defence ; unconditional offer.—Colonial Interests in Imperial Defence put before Colonies as suggested by Sir John Colomb.—Colonial Conference, 1902.—Sir John Colomb on the prospects.—His proposals for an Imperial Army.—Military Defence at the Conference ; proposals of Mr. Seddon and Mr. Brodrick.—Naval Defence ; Mr. Chamberlain adopts Sir John Colomb's arguments.—Sir John Forrest's Position.—Results of Conference.

HAVING shortly reviewed in previous chapters the progress of thought in relation to Imperial Defence, so far as it affects the protection of territories open to attack from the sea, it will be well perhaps to sum up the functions of the British Navy in this regard by the following quotation, viz. : "The British Navy so long as it maintains the superiority at sea, is a sufficient protection against invasion for every part of the Empire except India and Canada."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Imperial Defence* by Sir Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson, p. 40.

Before proceeding to consider, however, the general question of Colonial Co-operation in Defence, it is well to revert once again to another great function of the Fleet in war, so often dealt with by Sir John Colomb, i.e. the Protection of Commerce upon the high seas. Many were the essays in which he discussed this important subject, commencing with the paper "Naval Intelligence and Protection of Commerce in War,"<sup>1</sup> which it has been seen had such very practical results in the creation of the Naval Intelligence Department at the Admiralty. But the last word on this subject, so far as the United Kingdom is concerned (and the principles established apply equally to other parts of the Empire), was said in the exhaustive Report of the Royal Commission on the supply of Food and Raw Material in time of War,<sup>2</sup> of which Sir John Colomb was a most active Member.

The Commissioners, by the terms of reference, had to inquire into the conditions affecting the importation of food and raw material into the United Kingdom in war and into the amount of reserves, and to advise whether it was desirable to adopt any measures, in addition to the maintenance of a strong Fleet, by which supplies could

<sup>1</sup> See p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Cd. 2643 ; Cd. 2644. The Report was dated 1905.

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be better secured. As the Commission had upon it several of the most prominent advocates of the "free storage of grain" (including Mr. Henry Chaplin, M.P., and Sir Henry Seton-Karr) it could scarcely be expected that the Report should be unanimous, for Sir John Colomb had always been a strong opponent of all "faddist" schemes designed as substitutes for naval supremacy. Only those who know something of the lengthy sittings of the Commission, and followed the minute investigations made into the operations of commerce and shipping, can appreciate how necessary was the tenacious adherence to sound principles which he always insisted upon, often, indeed, when there was a danger of the Commissioners finding themselves somewhat befogged in a mass of technical detail. The able summary of naval requirements in commerce protection prepared by the Admiralty helped in a considerable measure to define the issues, for in considering the events of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Lords of the Admiralty pointed out that naval history demonstrated the truth of these two general principles<sup>1</sup>:—

"1. That the command of the sea is essential

<sup>1</sup> See *Report of the Royal Commission on the Supply of Food and Raw Material in Time of War*, p. 28.



for the successful attack or defence of commerce, and should, therefore, be the primary aim.

- “ 2. That the attack or defence of commerce is best effected by concentration of force, and that a dispersion of strength for either of those objects is the strategy of the weak and cannot materially influence the ultimate result of the war.”

In answering certain questions submitted by the Commission, the Lords of the Admiralty gave it as their opinion that in a war with any two of the great maritime Powers there would be no material diminution in the supplies of wheat and flour reaching the United Kingdom, though, of course, they could not guarantee that no captures whatever would be made by the enemy.<sup>1</sup>

While the majority of the Commissioners in the course of their report stated: “We look mainly for security to the strength of our Navy; but we rely in only a less degree upon the widespread resources of our Mercantile Fleet and its powers to carry on our trade and reach all possible sources of supply wherever they exist”;<sup>2</sup> there

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on the Supply of Food and Raw Material in Time of War*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> See Report of Commission, p. 62. It may be noted in this connexion that Sir John Colomb always declared himself

were, of course, reservations made by those who came to the Commission as strong advocates of particular schemes.

The Report, however, in its main features, exercised a beneficial influence upon official and public opinion in defining one of the main functions of the Navy in war, and rendered powerful aid to the many writings of Sir John Colomb, more especially in relationship to the operations of shipping.

Indeed the Shipping part of the Report was put mainly into shape by Sir John Colomb, who acted throughout in close touch with the Chairman—Lord Balfour of Burleigh. The feeling of the Chairman upon the matter is shown by the following letter which was written shortly before the Report was signed :—

“MY DEAR COLOMB,—Very many thanks for your kind letter. It is this sort of thing that en-

an opponent of the subvention of the Mercantile Marine by the Admiralty. In a speech in the House of Commons on September 7, 1887, and on many other occasions, he showed that it was not sound policy to pay a heavy annual charge in peace for ships to supplement the naval forces in war when the result would be that we should rob our main lines of communication of our best ships and force commerce into slower vessels.

courages me. Everyone is not so kind or so moderate as you are. . . .

“Some say that parts of the Report spoil the whole thing, while others say of the same parts that they are not strong enough. If I can get it through with only a few personal reservations, and no organized Report by a minority, I shall be satisfied. . . .

“I am very glad the Shipping part, which owes so much to you, is turning out well.

Yours very truly,

BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH.”

Some years before the publication of the Report of the Food Supply Commission, Sir John had himself made a careful inquiry into the speed and endurance of the merchant vessels of the great Powers, considering their capacity as commerce carriers and commerce marauders,<sup>1</sup> and laid down the following proposition :—

“The primary business of our war Fleet is to destroy, capture or contain in ports the enemy’s war-ships. Until this work is done all thought of applying the Navy to the direct protection of commerce must be abandoned. To what extent

<sup>1</sup> *Our Ships, Colonies and Commerce in Time of War* (London : P. S. King & Son, 1902).



our shipping and commerce may suffer in the interval between the outbreak of war and the completion of the Navy's real business, will depend upon previous arrangements made for and carried out by our Mercantile Marine itself."

In the above, as in all his works, Sir John Colomb did not limit the consideration of commerce protection to the shipping of the United Kingdom, but insisted, as always, that the commerce of each part of the Empire must be defended as part of a single world problem. For this reason he believed <sup>1</sup> that it should no longer be considered that the whole obligation of providing for the security of British sea commerce and shipping should rest solely on the shoulders of the citizens of the United Kingdom, "but that a common necessity demands a great British 'combine,' between all parts of the Empire, to secure in war the stability of the British economic position, and the existence of the Empire itself."

Years before the above words were written, Sir John Colomb had many times urged the necessity of Colonial co-operation in naval defence. He put the matter very plainly in a paper which first appeared in 1877,<sup>2</sup> when he maintained that

<sup>1</sup> *Our Ships, Colonies and Commerce in Time of War*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> "Imperial and Colonial Responsibilities in War," read

there was no distinction between Imperial and Colonial responsibilities in war, and in the course of his argument instanced the "external trade" of New South Wales, asking why the people of the United Kingdom should pay, find the force necessary, and be responsible for such trade, which neither came to nor went from the United Kingdom.

Sir John considered this subject at some length in a speech delivered in the House of Commons on March 2, 1891,<sup>1</sup> when he moved a Resolution dealing with the growth of Colonial Sea Commerce and British Naval Responsibilities, and he sought to obtain a Return showing the Annual Revenue, Seaborne Commerce, and Naval Expenditure of Great Britain, Foreign Countries and the self-governing Colonies. He showed the great increase in the trade of the three great groups of self-governing Colonies in North America, South Africa and Australasia. Taking the independent sea commerce which was carried on by them with foreign countries, and in which the United Kingdom had no direct concern, Sir John Colomb showed that it amounted in value to three-fourths

before the Royal Colonial Institute in May, 1877, and subsequently republished as Chapter iv. of *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*. See p. 114 of last-named work.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, March 2, 1891.

more than the total trade of the United Kingdom at the commencement of the reign of Queen Victoria, and, at the time he was speaking, that it amounted to about four times as much as the sea-borne trade of all Russia, was equal to that of Germany, about three-fourths that of France, two and a half times that of Italy, and nearly half that of the United States. Taking the percentage of naval expenditure and revenue, he found that Russia spent 5 per cent. of the total revenue on her Fleet, Germany 4 per cent., France 8 per cent., Italy 4 per cent., the United States 3 per cent., while the naval expenditure of the outlying Empire compared with revenue was practically *nil*. Pointing out that the Navy was for the defence of sea-boards and the defence of sea commerce, Sir John showed the great stake the Oversea Colonies had in the security of ocean trade, and how the British Empire differed from all other States of the world in that the internal communications were sea communications. He added, "Let us remember that it is the interest of every part of the Empire to assist in keeping the waterways free, and that it can only be done by a complete arrangement with all parts of the Empire." As to how far, up to that time, any attempt had been made to come to such an arrangement between the different portions of the



Empire for the defence of the whole, it may now be convenient briefly to consider.

Without attempting any review of the efforts towards co-operation for defence prior to the year 1884, except in so far as reference has already been made to Sir John Colomb's early publications in this connexion, it is well to take the reader at once to the year mentioned.

In 1884 an event of first-rate importance occurred in the formation of the Imperial Federation League as the result of a discussion held at a representative Conference, in the convening of which the active spirits were Mr. W. E. Forster, M.P., Sir John (then Captain) Colomb, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Frederick Young, Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, and Mr. F. P. Labillière. The League commenced active work in 1885 with the resolutions passed at the 1884 Conference as the basis of its policy. Of these, the most important was "That any scheme of Imperial Federation should combine on an equitable basis the resources of the Empire for the maintenance of common interests, and adequately provide for an organized defence of common rights."

In the first number of the Journal of the Imperial Federation League appeared an article in which it was stated, "Imperial Defence is not only a prime factor in Imperial Federation, it is

the main burden which Imperial Federation takes upon itself"; and though, of course, as in all societies, individual members had their own ideas as to the details of any scheme of Imperial Federation, the one matter upon which all appeared to be agreed was that common defence was essential to any scheme of closer union of the Empire. At the famous Conference of the League held in 1886, Professor J. R. Seeley (the eminent author of the *Expansion of England*) stated in a paper that the first object of Federation was "the defence of a trade which covers all seas," while Sir John Colomb, in the course of his paper, also read at this Conference, said, "Federation for common defence is, I believe, essentially necessary for Imperial safety," and urged the calling of a Conference, representative of the Parliaments of the Empire, "to examine the facts of our position and to fix the principles which are to guide our arrangements for defence."<sup>1</sup>

In the year following, the first official consideration to the great question of Co-operation for Imperial Defence by the representatives of the Empire assembled together was given, for a Colonial Conference (so often urged by Sir John Colomb) was called by Mr. Edward Stanhope, then

<sup>1</sup> For report of papers read at Conference of Imperial Federation League see *Imperial Federation*, August, 1886.

Secretary of State for the Colonies, and subsequently President of the Imperial Federation League.<sup>1</sup> At the opening meeting of this historic gathering in 1887, representatives of the self-governing Colonies were brought into formal consultation for the first time with the Home Government, and in his introductory address Lord Salisbury (then Prime Minister) referred to the Conference as "the parent of a long progeniture," adding that "distant Councils of the Empire may, in some far off time, look back to the meeting in this room as the root from which all their greatness and all their beneficence sprang."

Defence was undoubtedly the main motive for the Conference, and the urgency of the matter of a defensive organization appealed to Her Majesty's Government with great force owing to the patriotic action of the Colonies in offering contingents of troops for service in the Egyptian campaign. The Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury) in addressing the Conference did not leave any doubt upon the matter in the minds of his hearers,

<sup>1</sup> That the calling of this Conference was the direct result of the work of the Imperial Federation League, of which Lord Rosebery was chairman, and in which Sir John Colomb took a very prominent part, there can be no question. See article in *Imperial Federation* (the organ of the League, which was ably edited by Mr. Robert J. Beadon) of January 1887.



for in outlining "the real and most important business" upon which they would be engaged he gave it as "union for purposes of mutual defence."<sup>1</sup>

This 1887 Conference, then, afforded the Ministers of the Home Government a unique opportunity of emphasizing principles and laying down a sound and lasting basis upon which could be built up and developed, as the years went by, an effective Imperial organization, in the scheme of which all parts of the Empire should take their appropriate share in its naval and military defence. Various reasons, however, combined to let principles slip out of sight, and while undoubtedly difficulties in securing unanimity faced Ministers at the first Conference through the necessary lack of technical knowledge relating to defence on the part of the Colonial representatives, the variety of interests involved, and the presence of many voices speaking for Australia (Federation not taking place till 1901) and other causes, yet the most fruitful source of difficulty was the absence of any definite policy of co-operation on the part of the Home Government, and their inability to grasp and set clearly before the Conference the principles which should guide the defence of a maritime Empire.

It will have been seen that during the

<sup>1</sup> See Report of Conference, pp. 6, 7.

period now under consideration official thought was dominated by military ideas, which the Carnarvon Commission of 1879 had done a great deal to emphasize. It was, therefore, not surprising that the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Henry Holland<sup>1</sup> (afterwards Lord Knutsford), who was himself a member of the Carnarvon Commission, should devote a good deal of his opening address at the Conference to the findings of that Commission, and the more particularly "local aspects" of Imperial Defence.


Though, as has previously been stated, the Report of this Commission was not published in full,<sup>2</sup> Sir Henry Holland managed to tell the Conference something about its work, and what is still more important, that the opinions and recommendations of the Commission relating to the defence of Australia had been "confidentially communicated" to the Government of the Australasian Colonies in 1883. This latter fact goes far to explain the "localized" view of defence

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Holland had taken the place of Mr. Edward Stanhope at the Colonial Office before the Conference actually met, Mr. Edward Stanhope taking office in the Administration as Secretary of State for War.

<sup>2</sup> The Report of the Commission as mentioned on page 20, was confidential, but extracts from it were published in Volume ii. of the 1887 Conference Report. See VII D.

which took root from the first in the minds of Australian representative men, and the observations of Sir Henry Holland had only the effect of confirming them in the very limited view of defensive requirements which they had previously been invited to take.

Having referred to the fact that in 1880 the Merchant Navy of the British Empire equalled in tonnage all the Navies of the world put together, and that in 1885-6 more than two-thirds of the sea-going registered tonnage of the world belonged to the British Empire, the Colonial Secretary concentrated the attention of the Conference, not upon the means of defending this great commerce by a powerful Navy, but upon the local defence of ports. He referred to the introduction of steam power as enabling rapid and certain naval combinations to be made, so that the liability of the outlying ports of the Empire to sudden attack was vastly increased, and summed up the subjects connected with defence which the Conference should discuss as—the local defence of the ports, naval defence of the Australian Colonies, as discussed by Admiral Tryon, and other matters relating to the defence of ports, the military aspects of telegraph cables, and the employment and training of local troops for garrisoning works of defence, etc.





The theories which had influenced British statesmen as to the increased vulnerability<sup>1</sup> of ports and land defences through the introduction of steam had been dealt with many times by Sir John Colomb, and he had replied effectively to the doctrine of "steam bridging the Channel" by pointing out that it had done something infinitely greater, and had bridged the water distances which separated the Colonies from the Mother-Country and from each other.<sup>2</sup>

Knowing, however, that measures for the local defence of Australia would be more readily considered by the Australian delegates than matters of general Imperial Defence, the Imperial Government, with the natural desire to achieve some practical results at the Conference, pursued the line of least resistance.

The discussions in which the Australian delegates took part evidenced a strong desire to co-operate with the Imperial Government in order to secure both an increase in the Australian Squadron

<sup>1</sup> In an article referred to in *Imperial Federation* of August 1, 1889, Admiral Colomb absolutely rejected the common idea that steam had made distant ports more vulnerable than before; on the contrary, he declared that a steam Navy had overwhelming powers of defence as compared with a sailing Navy, and that the Colonies might rest in almost absolute security under its ægis.

<sup>2</sup> See *Defence of Great and Greater Britain*, page 14.



and also adequate defences at King George's Sound and Thursday Island (Torres Straits). With regard to the former, the initial impulse for strengthening the protection of Australia's expanding floating trade was given at the Inter-Colonial Conference at Sydney in 1881, but the suggestion that the cost of the increased naval defence should be borne by the United Kingdom did not meet with the approval of the Colonial Secretary. After a great deal of correspondence had taken place, Admiral Tryon, then in command at the Australian Station, submitted in 1885 a scheme to the Australian Governments which involved the Colonies bearing the cost of the construction and maintenance of an additional Fleet to be provided by the Imperial Government. While New Zealand and most of the Australian Colonies would have agreed to a modification of the scheme, which meant paying an annual sum for depreciation instead of bearing the cost of construction, the colony of Victoria was against contributing to the cost of maintenance or depreciation. Admiral Tryon suggested a compromise whereby the Colonies should pay the cost of maintaining the new Fleet, and 5 per cent. on the cost of construction, and the matter then came before the Conference.

At the Conference, the Colonies were asked to

contribute annually for ten years 5 per cent. interest on the cost of outlay and the cost of maintenance, which would be (a) in peace £91,000, (b) in war £150,000, and this being subsequently modified to involve no additional cost to the Australian Colonies in case of war, and interest not exceeding £35,000 per annum, the scheme was accepted after discussions at two whole sittings, subject to the sanction of the respective Parliaments. The Agreement provided that the ships should be retained within the limits of the Australian Station, and neither in peace nor war employed beyond those limits without the consent of the Colonial Governments.<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Holland in his remarks on this subject called attention to the fact that, while the scheme constituted a new departure for the Colonial Governments concerned, it was also new from an Imperial point of view,<sup>2</sup> for it had never before been laid down that a squadron of a certain

<sup>1</sup> The words "or employed beyond those limits only with the consent of the Colonial Governments" did not appear in the original draft submitted to the Conference and were added to meet the views of the Australian Delegates. Cf. Draft Agreements, pp. 258-261 of Vol. ii. (appendix) *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference*, 1887. (C. 5091-I.)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also the remarks of Lord George Hamilton (then First Lord of the Admiralty) at the Conference. See p. 42 of Vol. i. *Proceedings of Colonial Conference*, 1887.



strength should be kept always in certain waters, or removed only in case of extreme urgency.<sup>1</sup>

It was, however, hardly to be expected that, with no naval traditions or experience behind them, the Australian representatives should realize that the defence of the commerce of Australia would be better provided for on the high seas, and possibly by the exercise of superior sea-power in the Channel or Mediterranean, than around her own shores ; and in referring to the action of the Colonial Governments at the 1887 Conference Sir John Colomb subsequently observed that " they were not so much to blame as the Admiralty, who, in laudable anxiety to make some sort of a beginning, gave official countenance to natural local delusions as to the method of securing Australian maritime safety." <sup>2</sup> It is to be observed that at this Conference the national feeling <sup>3</sup> of Australia had not sufficiently advanced to evidence any

<sup>1</sup> See p. 257, Vol. ii. *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference*, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Colonies and Imperial Defence*, by the present author, in which occurred an interview with Sir John Colomb. The series of interviews under the above title first appeared in the *United Service Gazette*, 1902, and were subsequently published as a pamphlet by the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Imperial Conference*, by Richard Jebb (London : Longmans Green & Co., 1911), p. 54.

desire on the part of her statesmen for a separate Australian Navy. The formation of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901 saw the development of thought in this direction,<sup>1</sup> but how far it found its basis in the scheme for the Australian Squadron would be an interesting speculation for the philosophical historian.

As to the defences of King George's Sound and Thursday Island, the Imperial Government seemed to experience a difficulty in making up their minds (no doubt, resulting from the dual control of Admiralty and War Office at the coaling stations) as to whether these points were of sufficient Imperial importance to justify Imperial expenditure. Lord Derby, under the influence of the 1885 war scare, had offered armaments and submarine mine defence for these places to the Colonies, and, in order not to recede from this offer, the Home Government at the Conference offered some obsolete muzzle-loading guns and a submarine mine, but the Australians unanimously

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 155, 161, *et seq.* It is to be noted that the Defence of Australia was the main incentive to Federation. On its accomplishment the Land Forces were organized as one Federal Force, the chief feature of the new organization being an Australian Field Army made up of contributions of mobile troops from the States. Cf. *Report on Naval Defence of Australia for 1906*, p. 9.

rejected anything but breech-loading armaments. The position which Sir Henry Holland attempted to occupy on behalf of Her Majesty's Government was that they could not undertake the cost of land defences in Australia, in view of the large expenditure they incurred at the coaling stations ; but he certainly did not succeed in showing how King George's Sound and Thursday Island differed from other Imperial coaling stations. The places had been recognized as important by Admiral Tryon, and the Australian representatives had been led to expect the Imperial Government to take a considerable share in their defence, and this really because of, rather than in spite of, the policy they were adopting in fortifying the coaling stations—in pursuance of the Report of the Carnarvon Commission. The absence of any definite working principle shown by the attitude of the Home Government in regard to these positions was undoubtedly due to the lack of a combined plan for the defence of coaling stations by the Admiralty and War Office ; and after Western Australia had come forward with an offer to contribute nearly half the cost of the works at King George's Sound, and a part of the annual cost of maintaining the garrison, if the Imperial Government would supply breech-loading armament, both the Secretary for War and the Colonial Secre-



tary were forced to admit that they were personally favourable to the newer type of armament.

With regard to the military defence of Australia and the possibility of the establishment of a scheme to enable her forces to join with those of the Mother-Country, a good deal of discussion took place. The absence of uniformity in the methods of each Colony, and the desirability of an Imperial Officer being appointed as Inspecting Officer of the Australian Forces and Military Adviser to all the Governments, were recognized, and a Memorandum was circulated by the Secretary of State containing useful suggestions for the terms of service of the Colonial forces. In this document it was proposed that while the forces should serve at all times in defence of their Colony they should, with the assent of their Government, aid Her Majesty in any wars in which she should be engaged, the command in the last-named case being vested in the Commanding Officer of Her Majesty's troops.

It will have been seen that so far as defence matters were concerned the Conference was practically an Australian Conference,<sup>1</sup> but while important measures were discussed and decided regarding the defences at Simons Bay and Table

<sup>1</sup> See Article by Sir Charles Dilke in *Fortnightly Review* of June, 1887.

Bay, and Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr made a striking proposal regarding provision for the cost of general Imperial Defence,<sup>1</sup> Canada took practically no part in the Defence discussions. Sir Alexander Campbell, on her behalf, considered that the Canadian Pacific and Inter-Colonial Railways should be regarded as works auxiliary to Imperial Defence, and that the North American Squadron maintained for Imperial purposes provided Canada with sufficient security. Though relying on the fact that, at the time of the Canadian Confederation movement, the British Government had agreed to undertake the defence of the proposed Dominion, the main reason for the "waiting" policy of Canada was to be found in the existence of a doubt, on the part of her representative men, as to the direction in which the future of Canada lay. The national feeling was beginning even then to be felt, and whether closer union with the United Kingdom, independence, or combination with the United States was the national destiny of Canada constituted a question as to which opinion was very largely divided.

But though Mr Hofmeyr held with regard to the Colonies that "so long as no system of federation or government in which they are represented has been hit upon or developed, so long they cannot

<sup>1</sup> See p. 113.

be expected to be in duty bound to defend themselves against the European enemies of England," he nevertheless foresaw that if the Colonies remained within the Empire they would, in the future, have to take their share in its naval defence, and in an important speech he introduced an interesting discussion upon the following proposal :—

"The feasibility of promoting a closer union between the various parts of the British Empire by means of an Imperial Tariff of Customs to be levied, independently of the duties payable under existing tariffs, on goods entering the Empire from abroad, the revenue derived from such tariff to be devoted to the general Defence of the Empire." <sup>1</sup>

As the above involved an alteration of the Free Trade policy of the United Kingdom, Mr. Deakin very properly pointed out that the question was "one really for the English people, not for the Colonies"; but as Mr. Hofmeyr's proposal has been the subject of much comment when considering the burden of Imperial Defence, and in-

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference*, 1887, vol. i, at p. 463. A discussion on the subject of an Imperial surtax on foreign imports was initiated by Mr. Deakin (as Premier of the Australian Commonwealth) at the Conference of 1907 (p. 509).



deed probably had a bearing on the subsequent development of a policy for closer union of the Empire in other directions, it is thought well that the proposal itself should receive some place in this work.

After the meeting of the first Colonial Conference, which the Imperial Federation League had been largely instrumental in bringing about,<sup>1</sup> the League devoted itself to propaganda work and the establishment of branches in the Provinces and the Oversea Dominions.<sup>2</sup> Sir John Colomb took an active part on the Executive Committee of the League, and both there and in the House of Commons urged the necessity for a combination between the self-governing countries of the Empire to secure its maritime defence,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Note <sup>1</sup> on p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the Australian Branch of the League is still in existence at Melbourne, and with Mr. Alfred Deakin as President and Mr. E. Morris Miller as Hon. Secretary does valuable work in the discussion of practical methods of Imperial Co-operation. The most successful of the Canadian branches of the League was that at Toronto, which, on the dissolution of the parent League, became a branch of the British Empire League with a frankly "Preferential Trade" policy. Cf. Denison's *Struggle for Imperial Unity* (London: Macmillan & Co.).

<sup>3</sup> See speeches in the House of Commons on March 21, 1887; March 15, 1888; March 2, 1891.

and in the speech of March 2, 1891, to which reference has been made already, he reviewed the position as between the self-governing Colonies and the United Kingdom.

On June 17, 1891, the Imperial Federation League organized a Deputation to the Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury) for the purpose of urging upon him the convocation of a second Conference of the self-governing countries of the Empire, and in the course of his reply Lord Salisbury stated that it would be a frivolity to call oversea statesmen from their momentous avocations without having some proposition to make to the Conference. "I think," he added, "we have almost come to the time when some schemes should be proposed, and without them we shall not get very far."

Upon this suggestion the League appointed a special Committee to draw up a scheme, of which Committee Sir John Colomb was a member.<sup>1</sup> The Committee presented a most valuable Report<sup>2</sup> in the course of which they stated in regard to the

<sup>1</sup> The other members of the Committee were Lord Brassey (Chairman); Mr. James Bryce, M.P.; Sir Daniel Cooper, Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, Lord Lamington, Sir Lyon Playfair, M.P., Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Rankin, M.P., Sir Rawson Rawson, Lord Reay and Sir Charles Tupper.

<sup>2</sup> See *Imperial Federation*, December, 1892.

common interests of the self-governing countries :  
 "It is in the maintenance of the sea communications of the Empire that the community of interests is most absolute. The primary requirements of combined defence, therefore, are a sea-going fleet and naval bases." The Committee expressed the view that if the necessities of the case were made clear, the Colonies would be prepared to take their share in the cost of the general Defence of the Empire, provided that they were given a proper share in the control and expenditure of the common fund, and they outlined in some detail their recommendations as to how a Council of the Empire could be constituted.<sup>1</sup> In order to ascertain the views of the Colonies as to meeting the responsibilities of Imperial Defence, and determining the basis of contribution, the Committee considered that a Conference should be summoned *ad hoc*, and that the invitation to the Conference should be accompanied by a statement showing the general necessities of the Empire in defence, the means by which it had been provided hitherto, and the proposed means and cost of providing for it by joint action.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For further details on this head of the Report, see Chapter V. pp. 206-208.

<sup>2</sup> It was remarked that a preliminary inquiry by a Royal Commission might be necessary.



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On April 13, 1893, a Deputation from the Imperial Federation League waited on Mr. W. E. Gladstone (who had succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister) and presented the above Report.<sup>1</sup> The Deputation was introduced by the President of the League, Mr. Edward Stanhope, M.P., who a few days before the meeting had written to Sir John Colomb as follows:—

“111, EATON SQUARE, S.W.,

April 7, 1893.

“MY DEAR COLOMB,—I regard it as of the greatest importance, looking to the part that you have taken, that you should attend and speak at the Deputation to Mr. Gladstone on Thursday next. Please, if you possibly can, make your arrangements for so doing, as we absolutely rely upon you.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

EDWARD STANHOPE.”

Sir John Colomb was therefore present, and after Mr. Stanhope had introduced the Deputation, and had stated that they desired to press upon the Premier that the important question of Imperial Defence ought to be brought to the test and

<sup>1</sup> For Report of proceedings on this occasion see *Imperial Federation*, May, 1893, p. 111.

examination of a Conference, he spoke in support of the President. He referred again to the growth of Colonial sea-trade, pointing out that the portion which was independent of the United Kingdom amounted to  $83\frac{1}{4}$  millions a year. While acknowledging the contribution of Natal of £4,000 for military purposes, purely local, and the £126,000 of the Australasian Colonies for "naval purposes purely local," Sir John remarked that the three great groups of self-governing Colonies were contributing nothing to the general Defence of the Empire, the United Kingdom bearing all the responsibility and all the cost. He said that the time had come for common consultation with the Colonies, who could not be expected to take the initiative, and while he did not suggest a demand for direct contributions from the Colonies he suggested a Conference be called to consider the matter. Mr. Gladstone, in reply, acknowledged that some considerable progress had been made towards the formation of a scheme, but he thought that nothing could be called a scheme which did not distinctly lay down the principles upon which the burden of common defence was to be distributed and the nature and powers of the proposed Imperial Council of Defence.

The Imperial Federation League having brought the matter to this point and obtained

the approval of the present and late Prime Ministers to their proposal for a Conference, proceeded to appoint a special Committee to consider its future action, and this Committee took the view that the Report laid before the Prime Minister in April represented the maximum of political principles and opinions attainable by the League as a homogeneous body, by all the numerous and diverse elements of which it was composed, and recommended that the operations of the League be brought to a close.<sup>1</sup> This course of action, which was taken at the close of the year 1893, rendered the individual members free to advocate

<sup>1</sup> See *Imperial Federation*, December, 1893, at p. 279. It was, of course, inevitable that statements should be made that the leaders of the League had disbanded it because they found Imperial Federation to be an impracticable dream. (Cf. Statements by Mr. John S. Ewart, of Ottawa, in the *Kingdom Papers* No. 3, at p. 83.) For an entire refutation of this the reader should consult the leading article "A Fresh Start" in the above number of *Imperial Federation*, from which it will be seen that while the organization was essential for the first stages of the movement, when the time arrived to define the form Imperial unity should take a want of homogeneity made itself felt. The sections striving to move in different directions brought about a paralysis of real movement and activity. The restraining bands of the common organization were, therefore, unloosed, thus giving freedom to the various forces to forge ahead towards the ultimate end along their own several paths.



particular methods of Federation by means of separate organizations, and this is what in fact occurred.

Those believing that common defence was the essential basis of any scheme of Imperial Federation,<sup>1</sup> formed themselves into the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee with the Secretary of the late League (Mr. Arthur H. Loring)<sup>2</sup> as its first Honorary Secretary. Amongst the members of the late League on the first Executive of this Committee were Sir John Colomb (Chairman), Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster and Lord Lamington, and many other prominent members of the old League (including Lord Roberts) gave it their support. The Committee continued to urge the establishment of a common system of maritime defence, provided and controlled by a body in which all parts of the Empire were represented, and also the necessity of joint consultation between the United Kingdom and the self-governing Colonies.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Those believing in a scheme for the Commercial Union of the Empire formed themselves into "The United Empire Trade League," and of this organization the late Sir Howard Vincent was the guiding spirit.

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to exaggerate the value of the work accomplished by Mr. Arthur Loring during his nine years of strenuous work as secretary of the Imperial Federation League.

<sup>3</sup> The Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee as a small working body performed its operations under that title until

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No further Conference, however, for the discussion of defence and other great issues was in fact called in London until 1897,<sup>1</sup> in which year the Jubilee Celebrations brought together at the centre of the Empire the Premiers of the Oversea States. On this occasion Mr. Joseph Chamberlain (who had taken office as Colonial Secretary in Lord Salisbury's 1895 administration) presided, and it was decided that the proceedings should be informal and that the general results only should be published.

In his opening address, Mr. Chamberlain called attention to the gigantic naval and military forces of the United Kingdom, which were maintained at heavy cost not exclusively, or even mainly, for the benefit of home interests, but still more as a necessity of Empire, and for the protection of Imperial trade interests all over the

1909, in which year the name was changed to that of "Imperial Co-operation League." This League which is, therefore, the lineal descendant of the Imperial Federation League, continues to perform useful work on much the same lines as the Imperial Federation League of Australia and the Empire Club of Canada (with both of which it works in touch) and serves to promote closer union in Defence and Policy by the consideration in public and private of practical methods of Imperial Co-operation.

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted, however, that a Conference was held at Ottawa in 1894 where the United Kingdom and practically

world.<sup>1</sup> He showed the great interests of Canada and Australia in Imperial Defence, and, while acknowledging the Australian naval contribution, also referred with appreciation to the offer of a battleship from Cape Colony. On this head Mr. Goschen (First Lord of the Admiralty) subsequently spoke in appreciation of Cape Colony's offer, and hinted, not obscurely, that "we should be very glad to open up negotiations with Canada." He expressed himself in favour of the maintenance of the Australian Agreement, and incidentally stated that in regard to the safety of Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania "we hold ourselves responsible in the same way as we hold ourselves responsible for the safety of the British Isles."

In regard to Military Defence, Mr. Chamberlain urged that it was most desirable there should be in Australia and South Africa a uniformity of arms

all the self-governing Colonies were represented. The Conference met mainly to discuss the Pacific Cable Scheme, the consideration of which, though of great importance to Imperial Defence, is somewhat beyond the scope of this work. For a short account of the Ottawa Conference see *The Imperial Conference* by Richard Jebb (London: Longmans Green & Co.), vol. i. at p. 133.

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings of a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Premiers of the self-governing Colonies*, June and July, 1897. (C. 8596.)



and equipment, some central provision for stores, and for military instruction. He also made reference to the necessity of interchangeability of military duties between Home and Colonial troops, so that, for example, a Canadian regiment might come to this country and exercise with the British Army for twelve months and a similar regiment of British troops go to Canada. Looking to the future (and it was curious how soon afterwards the idea was brought to fruition), Mr. Chamberlain said: "I see no reason why these Colonial troops should not from time to time fight side by side with their British colleagues." Another suggestion had relation to an offer of commissions in the British Army to cadets from such Military Colleges as Kingston, and this proposal was soon afterwards carried out.

While the discussion of political relations at this Conference was of importance historically,<sup>1</sup> it recorded a material development in co-operation for Naval Defence by the unconditional offer of Sir Gordon Sprigg on behalf of Cape Colony to provide a battleship for the British Fleet. In 1899 the Speech from the Throne on the opening of Parliament expressed gratification that the Cape Parliament had recognized the principle of a common responsibility for the Naval Defence of

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 216, 217.

the Empire by providing a permanent annual contribution towards that object. The gift of £35,000 thus made was the more important in that it was subject to no restrictions, as in the case of the Australian contribution, and, in the words of Sir John Colomb, the Cape "recognized the absurdity . . . of supposing that these two islands could possibly bear the whole burden of the maritime defence of the Empire."<sup>1</sup> It is to be observed that the Conference of 1897 was the first occasion on which a responsible Minister had put before representatives of the Colonies their relations towards Imperial Defence, thus accepting the suggestion urged officially many times by the Imperial Federation League, and advocated, in season and out of season, with energy and determination, by Sir John Colomb.

It remained, however, for the 1902 Conference to see the whole position put clearly before the Colonial representatives in the comprehensive manner that Sir John Colomb believed to be essential; but, before considering that Conference from its defensive aspects, it is well to recall that the fight against the Boer Republics altered in a

<sup>1</sup> See "The Navy in Relation to the Empire," an Address by Sir John Colomb before the Junior Constitutional Club on February 16, 1899. For Lord Milner's views upon the Cape contribution see p. 240.

practical direction many cherished military notions, scattered the remaining theories of "passive" defence to the winds, and evidenced the solidarity of British interests throughout the world by the fact that "the soldiers of the Queen," furnished by the Colonies and Mother-Country alike, crossed the oceans and shed their blood on the kopjes and in the drifts of South Africa."<sup>1</sup>

Sir John Colomb was apprehensive of any sound scheme of Empire Defence resulting from another Imperial Conference while the War Office was still in doubt as to the real functions of British military forces. He called attention to Mr. Brodrick's speech in the House of Commons on March 4, 1902, when the War Secretary had referred to the approaching Colonial Conference by saying, "We shall then have an opportunity of seeing how far the scheme in our minds commends itself to the Colonies," and he remarked that there was nothing very new in a War Office "scheme," but the mischief was that "it never comes off with success."<sup>2</sup>

As to what Sir John Colomb himself proposed as a programme for securing that British military

<sup>1</sup> "British Defence, 1800-1900." See *British Dangers*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> See *British Dangers*, p. 6.



power should be promptly available for the general Defence of the Empire in war, he stated it shortly in the following terms :—

1. The Regular Army, and its Reserves, to be the nucleus of the Imperial Army.
2. The Imperial Army for great defensive wars to consist of the Army and its Reserves, augmented by such portion of Home and Colonial territorial forces as volunteer, and prepare, in peace, to hold themselves available for general service in war.
3. The acceptance of a binding obligation between the Governments of all parts of the Empire to secure similarity in armament, warlike stores, and all things really essential to such uniformity as is necessary to secure that, when the Imperial Reserves furnished by territorial forces from different parts of the Empire are brought together in the field, complication and confusion shall be avoided.<sup>1</sup>

The consideration of Military Defence at the Conference arose on a motion by Mr. Seddon, Prime Minister of New Zealand, who, in 1900, had succeeded in passing an Act in the New Zealand Legislature to provide for an Imperial Reserve. He wished to see each Dominion form such a

<sup>1</sup> See *British Dangers*, pp. 31–32.

Reserve on the lines of the Resolution which he moved as follows: "That it is desirable to have an Imperial Reserve Force formed in each of His Majesty's Dominions over the seas for service in case of emergency outside the Dominion or Colony in which such Reserve is formed. The limits within which such Reserve Force may be employed outside the Colony wherein it is raised to be defined by the Imperial and Colonial Governments at the time such Reserve is formed, and to be in accordance with any law in force for the time being respecting the same. The cost of maintaining and equipping such an Imperial Force to be defrayed in such proportion and manner as may be agreed upon between the Imperial and Colonial Governments." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is to be observed that in the *Report of the Major-General commanding the Canadian Militia*—Major-General (afterwards Sir) Edward T. H. Hutton—published before the War in South Africa in 1899, the organization of the Canadian Forces had been considered for (a) the Defence of Canadian soil and (b) the power to participate in the Defence of the British Empire. (Ottawa Government Printing Bureau.)

That same able officer was Commandant of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1902, and a copy of his Minute to the Defence Minister was printed in the *Appendix to the Papers Relating to the Conference*. (CD. 1299.) General Hutton considered the provision of troops for (a) the Defence of Australian soil and (b) the Defence of Australian interests wherever they might be threatened, and for

On this Mr. Brodrick launched the War Office "scheme." He was unable, as in all his past utterances in the House of Commons, to keep his favourite theme of the "invasion of England" even out of this speech to the oversea representatives. He alluded to the large preparations for military defence made by the War Office, which were not too large "in view of the possibility of our at any time losing command of the sea," and said that circumstances might occur in which it was most desirable that we should have a call on further troops. He referred to the good fighting material in Canada and Australia, and suggested that a portion of the oversea forces should be trained and held in readiness for oversea service, forming part of an Army Reserve of an Imperial Force, whose services were absolutely pledged in the event of the Government to which they belonged proffering assistance to the Imperial forces in an emergency.

Now it is to be observed that it would have been difficult to launch a scheme of this distinctly Imperial character at a more favourable opportunity, for Imperial feeling was now at its height owing to Home and Colonial soldiers having fought the latter, as in the case (b) of Canada he referred to the necessity of a Field Force capable of undertaking military operations in any part of the world.



side by side for the common cause in South Africa. But the absence of combined action between the Admiralty and the War Office led to an unattractive and confused picture of our defensive requirements being put before the Conference. The War Office representative was asking for aid in forming an Imperial Reserve for fighting the Empire's battles "in view of the possibility of our losing command of the sea," while the Admiralty representative (Lord Selborne) was assuring the oversea statesmen, in the course of an able exposition of principles, that "the British Empire owes its existence to the sea, and it can only continue to exist if all parts of it regard the sea as their material source of existence and strength." The lack of consultation between the Admiralty and War Office<sup>1</sup> was no doubt largely responsible for the failure to inspire the representatives with enthusiasm for the Imperial Reserve. Put forward in this piecemeal fashion as a scheme of its own, and not inter-related to a larger scheme of Empire Defence in which all were shown to be equally interested, Mr. Brodrick's advocacy was suggestive of an appeal for support of the Mother-Country in carrying on military conflicts in which she might become involved in Europe or elsewhere. Either through lack of knowledge or

<sup>1</sup> See view of Sir Charles Dilke on p. 131, note 2.

absence of imagination, or possibly a combination of both, the War Secretary failed to recognize the feeling of growing nationality in the Oversea States which would not be satisfied with anything short of a joint partnership in naval and military matters, and he was, therefore, not prepared for Canada and Australia to regard his proposals as an encroachment upon their autonomy. The War Office Scheme, accordingly, though sound for once in itself, fell flat, and the Canadian Ministers put the matter in a nut-shell when they gave expression to the view that the acceptance of the proposals for earmarking troops for Imperial Service "would entail an important departure from the principles of Colonial self-government."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is, perhaps, only fair to add that Sir Wilfrid Laurier, fearful of French-Canadian antipathy to any Imperial measure, would probably have rendered any scheme of closer union for defence very difficult of accomplishment at the Conference. Moreover, he was supported by a colleague, Sir Frederick Borden, whose attitude of mind was shown most clearly by a subsequent speech (delivered at Ottawa on February 23, 1906) when he argued that while Canadians could not tax themselves to maintain the British Navy, seeing that the money would be expended by a Committee in which the Canadians had no say, it was in fact unnecessary for Canada to assist in supporting the Imperial Fleet as she was afforded sufficient protection by the Monroe Doctrine, behind which "were the guns and warships of the United States and the whole power of eighty million souls."

However, put broadly, the main cause of the meagre results of this Conference, either in a military or naval direction, has been given with tolerable accuracy above, and it was summed up in a few words by Sir John Colomb, who, speaking later, said : <sup>1</sup> " With regard to the Coronation Conference, I think a great deal of the breakdown was due to the fact that the Admiralty came forward with the clearest possible statement of what supremacy at sea meant in its influences upon territorial defence, and the War Office walked in after them with an official contradiction." <sup>2</sup>

As regards Naval Defence, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain put the whole position of the distribution of the Empire's burden before the representatives in an even clearer and more emphatic manner than he had done at the previous Conference, and he

<sup>1</sup> Speech of Sir John Colomb as Chairman at a private discussion dinner of the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, November 19, 1906. See Report of the proceedings published by the Committee, pp. 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that Sir Charles Dilke took the same view of the Conference as Sir John Colomb. Speaking in the House of Commons on March 8, 1903, Sir Charles said : " The Colonial Conference failed very largely through the difference of opinion between the Army and the Navy, which the personal supervision of the Prime Minister, with the highest advice behind him, might have prevented." See *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 4 Series, vol. 118, at p. 1606.



used the exact arguments which had been so frequently employed by Sir John Colomb for many years in favour of the Oversea Dominions taking a greater share in the cost of defence. In the course of his vigorous address, he said: "While the Colonies were young and poor, in the first place they did not offer anything like the same temptation to the ambitions of others, and, in the second place, they were clearly incapable of providing large sums for their own defence, and, therefore, it was perfectly right and natural that the Mother-Country should undertake the protection of her children. But now that the Colonies are rich and powerful, that every day they are growing by leaps and bounds, their material prosperity promises to rival that of the United Kingdom itself, and I think it is inconsistent with their position, inconsistent with their dignity as nations, that they should leave the Mother-Country to bear the whole, or almost the whole, of the expense."<sup>1</sup>

The views of Mr. Chamberlain found adequate support from the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. Seddon, who moved a resolution to increase

<sup>1</sup> The small response on the part of the Colonies to the suggestions of Mr. Chamberlain no doubt largely influenced that statesman in starting his scheme of closer commercial union as an alternative method of bringing about Imperial unity.

the strength of the Australian Squadron, and also from Sir John Forrest, the Commonwealth Minister of Defence, who, in a statesmanlike and well-reasoned Minute to his Prime Minister (which was laid before the Conference) showed the inadvisability of a separate Navy for Australia. "Our aim and objects," he wrote, "should be to make the Royal Navy the Empire's Navy, supported by the whole of the self-governing portions of the Empire"; but he observed that if the Oversea Dominions agreed to this, it would be necessary for them to be "adequately represented at the Admiralty."

It should be added that Mr. Chamberlain always recognized that, on the Dominions assuming a larger share of the burden of defence, they should be represented in Imperial affairs, and at the Conference he took the opportunity of replying to the famous dictum of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, "If you want our aid call us to your Councils," by giving expression to these words: "If you are prepared at any time to take any share, any proportionate share, in the burdens of the Empire, we are prepared to meet you with any proposal for giving to you a corresponding voice in the policy of the Empire."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For further information on this head see Chapter V.



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As a result of the Conference the Admiralty were able to announce the following offers :—

*Cape Colony* : £50,000 per annum to the general maintenance of the Navy. No conditions.

*Commonwealth of Australia* : £200,000 per annum to an improved Australasian Squadron, and the establishment of a branch of the Royal Naval Reserve, two of the vessels of the Squadron to be manned by Australians who would receive extra pay. Under the new Agreement the sphere of operations of the Force was extended to the China and East Indies Stations in addition to that of Australia.

*Natal* : £35,000 per annum to the general maintenance of the Navy. No conditions.

*Newfoundland* : £3,000 per annum (and £1,800 as a special contribution to the fitting and preparation of a drill ship) towards the maintenance of a branch of the Royal Naval Reserve of not less than 600 men.

*New Zealand* : £40,000 per annum to an improved Australasian Squadron, and the establishment of a branch of the Royal Naval Reserve.

With regard to Canada, it was announced that this Dominion was unable to make any offer analogous to the above ; but the Government had



in contemplation the establishment of a local naval force in Canadian waters.

The consideration, however, of some aspects of the policy relating to the localization of Colonial naval forces may be conveniently deferred until the next chapter.



**IMPERIAL CO-OPERATION (*Cont.*),**  
**1902-1912**





## CHAPTER IV

### IMPERIAL CO-OPERATION (Cont.), 1902-1912

*" Britain's Fleet is the instrument of power and the symbol of her unity. British ships of war are the safe-guard of Colonial liberty, and the natural chain which holds the scattered communities together. The Fleet, therefore, ought to be one. Division is weakness, and the old story of the bundle of sticks has here its proper application."*—THE RT. HON. W. B. DALLEY.

Localization of Naval Forces.—Lord Selborne thereon.—Sir John Colomb on Separate Colonial Navies.—Deputation to Mr. Balfour, 1904.—Responsibility for Localized view.—Capt. Cresswell and Australian Navy.—Sir John Colomb's views.—Mr. Harold Cox's Amendment to Address.—Conference of 1907.—Attitude of new Government.—Mr. Haldane and Military Defence; Imperial General Staff; Colonial views.—Lord Tweedmouth on Naval Co-operation; Colonial Views.—Results of Conference.—Sir John Colomb; further views on Australian Navy and future of Pacific.—Mr. Deakin's Introduction of Defence Scheme.—Naval Scare of 1909.—New Zealand's Offer.—Australian attitude.—Canadian Resolutions.—Conference on Defence, as advocated by Sir John Colomb, called 1909.—Sir John Colomb's Letter thereon.—Death of Sir John Colomb, 1909.—Admiralty Proposal of Fleet Units.—Attitude of Dominions.—Mili-

tary Defence.—Principles as laid down by Sir John Colomb accepted at 1909 Conference.—Canadian Naval Service Bill.—Proposals of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.—Reception by Mr. R. L. Borden and others in Canada.—Control in time of War.—Progress of Canadian Naval Policy.—Imperial Conference of 1911.—Conditions of Dominion's Naval Services agreed upon.—Progress in Military matters.—Imperial Control of Dominion Troops and Ships a matter of Imperial Representation.—Mr. Borden's Visit, 1912.—Admiralty Memorandum.—Rise of German Fleet.—The Canadian Offer of 1912.—Mr. Borden's speech.—Acceptance of Principle urged by Sir John Colomb.—Recognition that Imperial Representation is essential to Imperial Organization.—Sir John Colomb's view that Representation lies at the root of the Defence Problem.

THOUGH Lord Selborne had pointed out to the 1902 Conference that "the Sea is all one and that the British Navy, therefore, must be all one," and that any attempt at the localization of naval forces would only be inviting disaster,<sup>1</sup> it is to be observed that Canada, who had proceeded further on the road to nationhood than any of the other Dominions, showed a growing desire for a local Fleet. The tendency towards the establishment of local naval forces then manifested in Canada, and beginning in Australia with the

<sup>1</sup> In Lord Selborne's able statement of policy made to the Conference, he observed: "The real problem which the Empire has to face in the case of a naval war is simply and absolutely to find out where the ships of the enemy are, to concentrate the greatest possible force where those ships are and to destroy those ships."



Report of the Five Naval Commandants, had, of course, a political rather than a strategical basis. Oversea politicians realized that the public wanted not only to see something for their money, but to maintain some control over the disposition of ships, there being an objection to providing ships to be controlled by a Board in London upon which they were not represented. If a little more consideration had been given to this point of view from the first, a great deal might have been done to place matters on a satisfactory and permanent footing. Whether this may not soon be too late will be considered hereafter.

Meantime, it is well to make clear the strategical objection to separate Colonial Navies which may be given shortly in the words of Sir John Colomb as follows: "Our territories cannot be secured by ships, so to speak, mounting guard over them; their safety will depend upon our ability to produce such force as is necessary, and to so distribute it as to deprive the enemy's ships of freedom of action. To restrict the freedom of action of British fleets, squadrons or ships to artificially defined areas, is to paralyse their power. . . . Even though it be assumed that such local squadrons would be freed from restriction on the outbreak of war, it is very certain that, when brought together with each other, and with

those of the Mother-Country, a homogeneous whole would not be formed.”<sup>1</sup>

But it cannot be denied that the fragmentary and insular policies of defence put forward by the United Kingdom in the past had exercised a very potent influence on the Dominions, and caused their statesmen to adopt the local view of defensive requirements. In the Memorandum of the great Deputation formed by the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, which waited upon Mr. Balfour as Prime Minister on December 10, 1904,<sup>2</sup> to urge upon him the necessity of primary consideration being given to Colonial Co-operation in the maintenance of the Navy at the next Colonial Conference, the matter was put very plainly in these words: “The example of the Mother-Country in the past in pursuing a policy for her own defence, so obviously founded upon mistrust of the efficacy of superior sea power to prevent military descents by sea, is largely responsible for apparent misconceptions on the part

<sup>1</sup> See *The Colonies and Imperial Defence* by the present author.

<sup>2</sup> This Deputation was organized by Sir John Colomb, Mr. Hayes Fisher, the present author (as Hon. Secretary of the Committee), and other Members of the Executive Committee, and on receiving it Mr. Balfour expressed a doubt “whether a more important or influential Deputation had ever waited on a Prime Minister of this country.”

of the Colonies of the relation of the Navy to their Military security."

But the influence of the "localized view" had taken root oversea, with the result that, before the next Conference could be summoned, there had been a considerable development in the movement for an Australian Navy. In 1905 Captain Cresswell,<sup>1</sup> the Director of Australian Naval Forces, presented a Report to the Commonwealth Minister of Defence in which he recommended the formation of a coast-defence squadron, consisting of three destroyers, and fifteen torpedo boats of the first and second class, which, while distinct from the Australian Squadron, should nevertheless be able to co-operate with the British Navy. Captain Cresswell admitted that "Australia is only assailable by sea, and its safety depends on the naval supremacy of the Empire," but he considered that the inter-colonial oversea trade of Australia, which he valued at £145,000,000, would be at the mercy of the "volunteer extemporized" or regular raiding cruiser if the Australian (Imperial) Squadron were ordered to rendezvous elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

The views of Sir John Colomb upon this Re-

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir W. Cresswell.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 12 of the *Report of the Director of the Naval Forces on the Naval Defence of the Commonwealth for the year 1905*, Melbourne. C 847.



port were given soon after its publication.<sup>1</sup> He admitted that such local defence as might be required to resist minor attacks from the sea were becoming more aquatic under modern conditions, and, therefore, agreed that torpedo craft was necessary to meet the necessities of such ports as were essential to the upkeep of sea-going power. But he pointed out that these ports were very few and far between, and in Australia limited to about one or two. "The policy for Australia," Sir John Colomb declared, "as for all other maritime States, or parts of States, is to make all sacrifices possible to maintain command of the sea, and not to waste money upon attempts at local naval protection of home waters. Their security and that of coasts depends upon sea command, which is only to be obtained by the provision and exercise of sufficient power to extinguish or paralyse the ability of the enemy to attack."<sup>2</sup> Sir John Co-

<sup>1</sup> See *British Australasian* of April 26, 1906, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The attitude taken by Sir John Colomb was strikingly supported from time to time by the eminent author of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, Captain (now Admiral) A. T. Mahan, whose works (as pointed out by Admiral Sir Vesey Hamilton and others) were the outcome of the movement begun years before by Sir John Colomb. Writing in the *National Review* of July, 1902, upon "Considerations governing the Disposition of Navies" (subsequently republished amongst his *Essays*) Captain Mahan said: "What

lomb considered that Captain Cresswell had wholly underrated the difficulties of any enemy in carrying out an attack upon Australian commerce by armed merchant cruisers, and consequently that he had overrated the dangers to be apprehended in Australian waters from any such form of attack.

Opinion in the House of Commons regarding Colonial Co-operation in the Defence of the Empire found expression on February 15, 1907, when, in anticipation of the advent of the Colonial Conference, Mr. Harold Cox proposed an Amendment to the Address, submitting that in accordance with the precedent of 1902, it was desirable that the first question to be laid before the delegates from the Colonies should be the importance of the fuller participation by the Colonies in the cost of defending His Majesty's Dominions. In the Debate which followed, Mr. A. J. Balfour (Leader of the Opposition in the new Parliament) took a rather different line to that which he had adopted in his speech in reply to the Deputation he re-

Australasia needs is not her petty fraction of the Imperial Navy, a squadron assigned to her in perpetual presence, but an organization of naval force which constitutes a firm grasp of the universal naval situation. . . . The essence of the matter is that local security does not necessarily, nor usually, depend upon the constant local presence of a protector, ship, or squadron, but upon general dispositions." Cf. Sir John Colomb's views in his earliest essay, pages 12, 13.

ceived as Prime Minister on December 10, 1904,<sup>1</sup> and deprecated pressing the Colonies to provide ships and troops to hand over to the United Kingdom in the event of Imperial complications. He did not think this could be done until there was some centralized organization by which all parts of the Empire were combined into one more highly organized body. He regarded asking Colonial taxpayers to vote money for somebody else to spend as an impossible proposition.<sup>2</sup>

From this important Debate it is well to take the reader at once to the Colonial Conference of 1907. It may first be observed that the task of calling this Conference no longer rested with a Unionist Administration (as in the cases of the previous Conferences in 1887, 1897 and 1902), for the sweeping victories of the Liberals in 1906 confirmed in power the Administration of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman which had assumed Office on the resignation of Mr. Balfour in 1905.

While the desire to promote Imperial Co-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Wilfrid Laurier had always strongly opposed the idea of Canada spending money on defence, the extent of which might, he thought, be regulated by European rather than Canadian interests. Speaking in March, 1907, Sir Wilfrid declared: "I expressed five years ago that for no consideration whatever would Canada be induced to be drawn into the vortex of European militarism."



operation on the lines of Defence had been clearly manifested throughout their careers by such leading Liberals as Mr. Asquith, Mr. Haldane, Sir Edward Grey and others, who may be considered as belonging to the Imperial group of the Liberal party, it cannot be denied that a considerable section of the victorious Liberals, of which the Prime Minister was one, looked rather to a policy of friendship with foreign countries, and a consequent limitation of armaments, as the policy of this country, in contradistinction somewhat to her finding salvation in a policy of closer union with the Oversea States of the Empire for the maintenance of adequate naval and military defence. The alteration in the driving force behind the desire for closer co-operation possessed by the new Ministry as against the old one was, perhaps, revealed to some extent in the difference of tone between the last despatch of the Unionist Colonial Secretary (Mr. Alfred Lyttelton) and the first one of his Liberal successor (Lord Elgin). Writing in regard to the next Conference while he was still in office, Mr. Lyttelton, in the course of a despatch to the Oversea Dominions, expressed the hope of His Majesty's Government that it would "promote the better union and the collective prosperity of the British Empire";<sup>1</sup> while,

<sup>1</sup> Cd. 3406, p. 15.

writing of the same Conference, Lord Elgin stated that His Majesty's Government had every confidence that the Conference would "help to increase the good understanding and cordial feeling" existing between the self-governing countries of the Empire.<sup>1</sup> It would be obviously unfair to draw any definite conclusions from the mere difference in wording of the above quoted despatches, yet the dissimilarity in the mode of expression did, in fact, evidence an alteration in attitude on the part of the Home Government. But the matter had to be viewed from more than one aspect, and though the Colonial Office was unfortunately given to a statesman who could be trusted not to embark on any original course of action, it was a great gain that Military Defence was placed in the hands of one of the clearest thinkers and most practical statesmen in the Empire, for it was not to be supposed that Mr. Haldane was likely to let slip any opportunity of developing co-operation.

Introducing the subject of Military Defence at the 1907 Imperial Conference, Mr. Haldane explained firstly that the Army should be divided into two parts, one for Home Defence, raised by the citizens, and under no obligation to go over

<sup>1</sup> Cd. 2975, p. 4.

sea, and the other for the Empire as a whole, acting as an expeditionary force in conjunction with a Navy in command of the sea. He emphasized the desirability of the home forces of the various Dominions being organized, if not on a common pattern yet with a common end in view and a common conception. He compared the Territorial Army about to be established in England as corresponding in its functions with the Canadian Militia and with the forces in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. In order to work with a common conception it was necessary to have skilled advisers, and he suggested for this purpose that the General Staff which had been created at home should receive an Imperial character. The General Staff Officers, being trained in a great common school but recruited from varying parts of the Empire, would be at the disposition of the local government or local Commander-in-Chief, whether he were Canadian, British, Australian, New Zealander, or South African. The Commanding Officer could accept or disregard the advice of his General Staff Officer, but he would have at his elbow some one with knowledge from the headquarters of the General Staff. He instanced how valuable it would be when studying matters of Imperial Defence, say in Canada, for a General Staff Officer to be sent



to Canada in exchange for one of the Canadian General Staff, who would come over here and assist in working out the problem. By such interchange of officers, and the General Staff working as a military mind surveying the Empire as a whole, much would be done to bring about uniformity of pattern in organization and weapons, etc., which was essential to effective co-operation in war.

Mr. Haldane circulated papers calling attention to three great principles, viz. : (1) The obligation of each self-governing community to provide for its local security ; (2) the duty of arranging for mutual assistance on some definite lines in case of common need ; (3) the necessity of maintaining sea supremacy which could alone ensure military co-operation at all.

He wanted to make the General Staff an Imperial school of military thought so that all the members would be imbued with the same traditions, and be acquainted with the principles generally accepted at headquarters.

Sir Frederick Borden for Canada pointed out that under the Militia Law the Dominion could only spend money for the defence of Canada herself, and before a force could be contributed to Imperial Defence abroad, Parliament would have to be called together, each case being dealt with as it should arise. He appeared apprehensive

that the General Staff might have authority independent of the Defence Minister in the Dominions, but, on learning of the purely "advisory" functions, he welcomed the exchange of officers, and agreed also to the necessity of uniformity of weapons and the desirability of establishing factories in the Dominions for the supply of arms and ammunition. Mr. Deakin for Australia regretted that the remoteness of his Dominion might make interchange of whole units impracticable, but Sir Joseph Ward for New Zealand did not take that view, and thought that New Zealand could get together a Volunteer unit at any time for training with the forces in Great Britain. Dr. (now Sir Thomas) Smartt spoke in favour of disbanding some of the forces of the Cape Colony and re-enrolling them on terms of liability to serve anywhere in the Empire, if the Colonial Government wished to despatch an expeditionary force. Mr. Haldane thought this "would be a most valuable thing," but Sir Joseph Ward opposed the idea of ear-marking troops beforehand, believing that the best method was to draw upon the volunteers for wherever the fight might be. Mr. Haldane, however, showed that what was wanted was similar to his Territorial organization, the men of which, though liable to serve only in the United Kingdom, were enabled, through the Commanding Officer, to subject

themselves to serve in any place outside the United Kingdom.

But Sir Wilfrid Laurier was very fearful of any resolution which tended to commit his Government to any action, and while Mr. Haldane described the General Staff as "for the service of the Empire," Sir Frederick Borden preferred "for the service of the various Dominions."

Regarding the relations of the Colonies to the Imperial Committee of Defence, Mr. Deakin wished that the Dominions should have a right of consulting the Committee and sending Representatives to express their views, and this was agreed to by formal resolution.<sup>1</sup>

With reference to Naval Defence, the Conference was addressed in a somewhat inconsequent fashion by Lord Tweedmouth,<sup>2</sup> then First Lord of the Admiralty. Having observed that the United Kingdom was responsible for the Naval

<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned that Sir Frederick Borden in 1903 had been invited to sit with the Committee.

<sup>2</sup> The absence of any desire on the part of the First Lord to promote any measures of closer union for naval defence was clearly shown before the Conference. Speaking on January 26, 1906, this kindly gentleman, whose qualifications for one of the most important Cabinet offices will always remain a mystery, gave expression to the statement that "for his part he should be quite prepared to give the protection of the British Navy to the Colonies as a free gift."



Defence of the Empire at large, he stated with regard to Colonial aid that "we gladly take all that you can give us, but, at the same time, if you are not inclined to give us the help that we hope to have from you, we acknowledge our absolute obligation to defend the King's Dominions across the seas to the best of our ability."

Having regard to the rapid development of thought oversea in regard to the Navy, something more than this weak statement was required ; but the utmost that the First Lord would admit in suggesting co-operation was that the Government were ready to consider a modification of the existing arrangements to meet the views of the various Colonies, and thus it would be of assistance if the Colonial Governments would undertake to provide for local service in the Imperial Squadrons the smaller vessels that are useful for defence against possible raids, and also to maintain docks and coaling facilities for His Majesty's ships. The idea was that the Australian desire for a local naval service could be met by Australia making local provision for the smaller craft.

This suggestion "to allocate to local purposes certain portions of the subsidies already given" having been put forward, Lord Tweedmouth asked for the views of the representatives. Mr. Deakin, the Prime Minister of the Australian

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Commonwealth (who was present at the 1887 Conference), spoke, as regards general defence, of the difficulty of finding the measure of responsibility; Sir Joseph Ward for New Zealand favoured an increase of cash contributions; Mr. Brodeur for Canada considered that the naval contribution of his Dominion should not be officially given as *Nil*, as she provided the Fisheries Protection service and was taking over the dockyards at Halifax and Esquimalt; while Dr. Smartt and Mr. Moor for Cape Colony and Natal respectively, took the view that the abnormal military expenditure of these Colonies, owing to the native population, was the same in principle as Canada's expenditure on policing the fisheries; but the people of Cape Colony (Dr. Smartt declared) would not "for one moment desire to raise that as an argument" to prevent them meeting the legitimate obligation to assist in naval defence. They wished to develop the Naval Volunteers and approved the policy of providing submarines. Newfoundland was prepared to increase her liability regarding the Naval Reserve under the Agreement of 1902. General Botha, speaking for the Transvaal, wanted to see the South African Colonies federated, and then "a system of defence for the whole of South Africa."

The results of the meetings of this Conference

and interviews between the Colonial Ministers and the Admiralty made it manifest, Lord Tweedmouth subsequently stated, that Australia wished to terminate the Agreement of 1902 and start "something in the way of a local defence force." New Zealand wished either to continue the subsidy or aid in defence by the provision of submarines, while South Africa wanted either a submarine flotilla or help with regard to Naval Volunteers at Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Natal. In the latter connexion, the First Lord had pointed out, when replying on the discussion, that the wastage in war would be one of ships rather than men, as was shown in the Japanese War, and that a considerable number of men from damaged ships would be at the disposal of the Admiralty for service in other ships. The admission, therefore, of an unlimited number of men to the Naval Service would mean that there would be nothing for them to do. He called attention later, however, to the system of naval cadetships. There were eight allotted to Australia, two for New Zealand, two for the Cape, one for Natal, and two for other Colonies (including Canada), who had not at the time expressed a wish to have any.

Mr. Deakin, in speaking of the Naval Agreement of 1902, stated that it was not satisfactory either to the Admiralty, as the ships were



localized, or to the Parliament of the Commonwealth, as the function of local protection, which had been the reason for entering into the Agreement in 1887, had practically ceased to exist by the enlargement of the area of operations of the squadron to China and Indian seas. He realized the wisdom of associating any local force in the closest possible manner with the Navy, thus assisting to keep the local vessels up to its high standard and enable officers and men to enjoy opportunities of advancement which they would not have if the service were completely isolated. "We look," he said, "upon any vessels for local defence not only as Imperial in the sense of protecting Australia, but because they will be capable of co-operating with any squadron which you may think fit to send into our waters to meet any direct attacks in proximity to our coasts."

Sir Joseph Ward expressed the willingness of New Zealand to fall in with Australia's wishes regarding the termination of the Agreement to which he was not, however, opposed in principle. He wished to get advice from the Admiralty as to the comparative merits of subsidy and submarines, but the Admiralty refused to give this on the somewhat astonishing pretext, put forward by Lord Tweedmouth, that it was not a matter

in which the Admiralty could pretend to adjudicate.

As regards South Africa, the £85,000 paid by Cape Colony and Natal would go towards providing a flotilla of submarines or destroyers and a vessel for training the Naval Volunteers, now to be called "Royal."

For Canada, Mr. Brodeur reiterated the plea that his Dominion had been doing her duty "in the manner most conducive to Imperial interests," and he again laid stress upon the fisheries protection and responsibilities at Halifax and Esquimalt. He expressed willingness to work in co-operation with the Imperial authorities "so far as it is consistent with self-government."

It remained for Sir Wilfrid Laurier, however, to adopt all the old arguments, which had been made familiar twenty or thirty years before, in favour of Canada doing nothing for Imperial Defence. On a motion of Dr. Smartt that the Conference, recognizing the vast importance of the Navy to the Defence of the Empire and the protection of its trade, considered it the duty of the Dominions to make such contribution towards the upkeep of the Navy as might be determined by the local legislatures, Sir Wilfrid expressed the view that it was impossible to have a uniform policy and said that in Canada "we have to tax our-

selves to the utmost of our resources in the development of our country, and we could not contribute or undertake to do more than we are doing."

This "out of date" attitude, which the Canadian people subsequently emphatically repudiated as unworthy of the status of the great Dominion,<sup>1</sup> was no doubt adopted to please the French Canadians, who, while opposed to a policy of annexation to the United States, were confirmed adherents of the *status quo* as regards Canadian relations with the rest of the Empire. The refusal of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to lead rather than be led by this section of Canadian opinion was shown later to be one of the greatest blunders of his political life. Confining attention, however, for the moment to the events at the Conference, the opposition of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to the Resolution of Dr. Smartt was sufficient to cause it to be abandoned, although no other objection was raised, it being considered that the Resolution should be unanimous if passed at all.

It will have been seen, therefore, that the Australian attitude in the desire for a separate fleet

<sup>1</sup> The Canadian General Election of 1911 was largely concerned with the naval question, and resulted in the complete defeat of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the placing in power of the well-known Imperialist, Mr. R. L. Borden. As to the attitude of this statesman towards the Navy, see pp. 175-180, and pp. 187-193.



was the most emphatic departure from previous policy and practice which the Conference had to record in the direction of naval defence. The result of the Conference was a great disappointment to Sir John Colomb, who wrote: "It is quite clear that the broad principle of co-operation as accepted by the first Conference, approved by the second, and not only confirmed, but in its application extended, by the third, has now been abandoned by the fourth. So the relations of outlying British States to the responsibilities and burdens of maintaining a free sea, without which they cannot survive, may be described once more as 'go as you please.'"<sup>1</sup>

Sir John Colomb saw at once the difficulties that would be encountered, both from the point of view of effective naval defence and Imperial unity, in bringing into existence a separate Navy for Australia. He pointed out that "whatever may be the initial cost of starting the programme of an Australian Navy, the amount of expenditure must be continually and persistently augmented if the possession of a Navy, in any true sense, is not to become a costly and an idle dream."<sup>2</sup> He also referred to the diffi-

<sup>1</sup> See article by Sir John Colomb entitled "Australia and the Navy" in *Melbourne Argus* of June 15, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> See article "Australia and the Navy," *ibid.*

culty of Australian ships flying the white ensign and acquiring the status of British ships of war when they were not under the direct authority, and subject to the control, of the United Kingdom. As regards *personnel*, he showed that the training necessary to qualify for rank or grade in the Royal Navy could not be reduced or simplified, nor tests of fitness lowered, to facilitate interchange, and, therefore, that the Australian force could not as a whole be regarded as an organized and efficient reserve for the Royal Navy. In the latter connexion, he emphasized the need of ships in modern war rather than men, and asked "when the ships of Spain had been sent to the bottom at Manilla and those of Russia in the Straits of Tsu Shima, of what avail were the King of Spain's Naval Reserves on the shores of the Mediterranean or those of the Czar on the Baltic coast?"

As regards the defence of the Pacific area, Sir John called attention to the necessity of the development of war resources in the Colonies having Pacific sea-boards,<sup>1</sup> and gave the following

<sup>1</sup> In the *Fortnightly Review* of August, 1900, Sir John Colomb had called attention, in an article entitled "Our Naval Arrangements in the other Hemisphere," to the urgent necessity of establishing means of production and manufacture of supplies and ammunition of war to meet naval requirements

warning: "The voices that call for real British unity are drowned by the shoutings for constitutional rights reverberating throughout the Empire from one self-governing State to another. Until the current of thought turns back to its old British channel of willing sacrifice in the discharge of duties to the Empire, the British future in the Pacific ocean will probably be found, at no distant date, to rest upon the good nature of the United States or the tender mercies of Japan."

On December 13, 1907, Mr. Deakin introduced his Defence Scheme into the Commonwealth Parliament. He based the whole of his remarks upon what he termed "an entire change of front on the part of the British Parliament," for recent speeches of British statesmen in the Commons and at the Conference evidenced that no demands of any kind would be made upon Australia in connexion with Imperial Naval Defence. He called attention to the speech of Mr. Balfour<sup>1</sup> in the House of Commons when the Opposition Leader had deprecated pressing the Colonies to assist in defence, and to that

in the Oversea States of Canada and Australia, which he regarded as Pacific States.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 146.





of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, made at the opening of the Imperial Conference, when the Premier had stated that the control of naval defence and foreign affairs must go together; and from these utterances Mr. Deakin concluded, "seeing that we have no voice in foreign affairs, we are not obliged to take any part in naval defence." He referred to Lord Tweedmouth's "splendidly magnanimous attitude" and showed that representatives of the Admiralty had arrived at the same position as the Australian Premiers did in 1881, viz., that the whole defence of the sea and its control should be a matter for the British Government and the British Navy, while the defence of Australian harbours and coasts should be left to Australia, except that there might be a small flotilla of Australian vessels capable of being used by the Navy as part of its Squadron.

On this reading of Australian requirements Mr. Deakin proposed that, in place of the Australian Naval Agreement lately in existence, the Commonwealth should build, man, and maintain at her sole expense a flotilla of submarines and destroyers. The feature which he had been pressing on the Admiralty (and he quoted the correspondence),<sup>1</sup> was that any flotilla created and

<sup>1</sup> Cd. 4325.

maintained by the Commonwealth must be under Commonwealth control, though the Parliament would place the ships under the Commander-in-Chief whenever that was deemed necessary. In order that the men of the flotilla should not be removed from the possibilities of advancement, Mr. Deakin wanted them to be engaged in Australia under the same conditions as those of the Royal Navy and, after serving on the local vessels, to pass into other ships of the Royal Navy and continue their training elsewhere. They would be inspected by the Admiral and be subject to naval discipline, and while on the station they would receive Australian rates of pay. The ships would fly the white ensign with the Southern Cross and be altogether Australian in cost and political control as to their movements and stations. In everything else they would be part of the British Navy.

It will be seen that in this speech of the Australian Premier certain points had been considered, but rather more at that moment from the Australian than the Imperial point of view; and there were many difficulties, as, for example, the movements of ships of an Australian separate Fleet, flying the white ensign, which might at any time complicate delicate negotiations between the United Kingdom and foreign Powers.

These and many other points had subsequently to be considered.

The serious statements as to the growth of foreign Navies (more especially that of Germany) made by the British Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty on the introduction of the Navy Estimates of 1909-10 caused, however, a new turn to be given to the question of Imperial Co-operation in Defence. As a result of these statements, New Zealand, through her patriotic Prime Minister Sir Joseph Ward, telegraphed on March 22, 1909, an offer to bear the cost of the immediate building and arming of a first-class battleship<sup>1</sup> and, if subsequent events showed it to be necessary, this Dominion offered a second warship of the same type. As the Australian Commonwealth did not act at once, the Governments of New South Wales and Victoria telegraphed their willingness to share the cost if the Commonwealth subsequently offered a Dreadnought, and, if no such offer was made, to bear the whole cost themselves.

On April 15, 1909, the Commonwealth Government cabled a Memorandum setting forth proposals for a Naval Defence Force on the lines proposed by Mr. Deakin in 1907, though it was

<sup>1</sup> The completed battle-cruiser H.M.S. *New Zealand* was inspected by His Majesty the King before she left for a world-cruise in February, 1913.



suggested that in time of war, or upon a declaration by the senior naval officer representing the British Government that a condition of emergency existed, the vessels should be placed by the Commonwealth under the orders of the Admiralty. The approval of the Commonwealth would, however, be necessary for coast-defence vessels to be employed in seas remote from Australia.<sup>1</sup>

As the Canadian Parliament had passed a Resolution on March 29, 1909, in favour of the speedy organization of a Canadian Naval Service, to act in co-operation with the Imperial Navy, Mr. Asquith, as President of the Imperial Conference,<sup>2</sup> conveyed an invitation to all the self-governing Dominions to attend a Conference on Defence<sup>3</sup> in July of that year.

So the exact consummation for which Sir John Colomb had always striven, viz., a Conference between Home and Oversea Governments called specially for the purpose of considering matters of Naval and Military Defence was at

<sup>1</sup> See Correspondence and Papers relating to Naval and Military Defence, 1909. Cd. 4948.

<sup>2</sup> The 1907 Conference altered the title from "Colonial Conference" to "Imperial Conference," and the British Prime Minister was made President.

<sup>3</sup> This was suggested in accordance with Resolution I. of the Conference of 1909, which provided for the summoning of subsidiary Conferences.

last achieved, and it is not surprising that this important move on the part of Mr. Asquith met with his cordial and hearty support.

On May 8, 1909, Sir John Colomb, as Chairman of the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee,<sup>1</sup> addressed a letter to Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister conveying warm appreciation of his action in inviting the self-governing States to a Conference upon Defence. In the course of the letter, Sir John Colomb wrote: "Having carefully watched the proceedings of the various Imperial and Colonial Conferences which have only incidentally dealt with the Naval Defence of the Empire, the Committee has realized with regret that hitherto no broad general line of policy has been laid down, and believe that this is mainly due to the want of a full and joint inquiry beforehand by a representative Imperial Commission."<sup>2</sup> While the fear was expressed that the system which had hitherto prevailed of indi-

<sup>1</sup> This was the last official act of the Committee under that name, as it changed its name immediately afterwards to "Imperial Co-operation League"; indeed, the decision to change the name was recorded in the letter to Mr. Asquith.

<sup>2</sup> At the Imperial Conference of 1911 it was decided to appoint an Imperial Commission to deal with trade. Subsequent events regarding defence showed how difficult it was to reach a satisfactory agreement without a thorough investigation beforehand

vidual and independent consultation between the Oversea States and the Admiralty, before any general principles were agreed upon by the Empire, did not tend to effective organization and co-ordination of efforts, it was recognized as impracticable to hold an inquiry by the suggested representative Imperial Commission before the July Conference. Still, it was hoped when the occasion arose the idea would be borne in mind.<sup>1</sup>

As the preparation of this letter was practically the last piece of public work performed by Sir John Colomb before his death on May 27, 1909, a pathetic interest attaches to the concluding paragraph, which read as follows: "To those who have long laboured to awaken attention to the ever increasing burdens of British naval responsibilities, the recent manifestations from His Majesty's Dominions beyond the Seas (to which in your recent speech at Glasgow you so eloquently referred) have not come as a surprise, and they feel that this outburst of recognition of common interest in maritime security, from all parts of the Empire, seems now to offer a unique opportunity for statesmanship which, if lost, may never recur."

About the same time as this letter was

<sup>1</sup> See also p. 247.



penned, Sir John Colomb was engaged in writing a Memorandum which he intended for the consideration of the Committee of Imperial Defence. In view of subsequent developments which brought about the Canadian offer<sup>1</sup> the following extract from the notes left by Sir John Colomb, referring to the importance of Canada, Australia and New Zealand taking a share in providing for naval contingencies in the Pacific area, shows a really remarkable prescience: "The first step towards a beginning is the awakening of these States to a conviction of the necessity for their co-operation in a general plan for the maintenance of the naval position in the Pacific. Such a declaration—confidential or otherwise—must come not from the Admiralty but the Government. The opportunity is afforded by the splendid evidence of Colonial recognition of the extra burden thrown on the United Kingdom for defence in the North Sea by the naval development of Germany."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 189–190.

<sup>2</sup> The Memorandum from which this is a quotation was never completed owing to Sir John Colomb's death soon after it was started. Writing to his friend, Lieutenant L. H. Hordern, R.N., a fortnight before he died, Sir John said: "I am ill in bed. . . . I fear it is all up with my preparing the Memorandum." (Cf. Admiralty Memorandum prepared for Canadian Government, p. 187.)

It will be always a matter for profound regret to Sir John Colomb's followers and co-workers in the cause of Closer Union for Defence that he should not have lived to see the meeting and hear the results of the first Naval and Military Conference of the Empire, but this regret is tempered by the reflection that before his death Sir John knew that the Conference, which he had so long and so strenuously advocated, was about to assemble at the centre of the Empire.

When the delegates met in August, 1909, they were provided with a Memorandum from the Admiralty in which it was laid down that the main duty of the Conference, as regards naval defence, was to determine the form in which the various Dominion Governments could best participate in the burden of Imperial Defence, with due regard to varying political and geographical conditions.

The opinion was then expressed that a Dominion Government desirous of creating a Navy should aim at forming a distinct Fleet Unit consisting of at least the following:

One Armoured Cruiser (new *Indomitable* class, which is of the *Dreadnought* type).

Three unarmoured Cruisers (*Bristol* class).

Six Destroyers.

Three Submarines with necessary auxiliaries.

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Methods on different bases of expenditure were discussed, with the result that Canada and Australia evinced a desire to lay the foundations of Fleets of their own, though it was recognized that the *personnel* should be trained and disciplined under similar regulations to the Royal Navy, so as to allow of interchange and union between the British and Dominion Services.

A remodelling of the squadrons in Far Eastern waters was considered on the basis of establishing a Pacific Fleet consisting of three Units, of the composition already mentioned, in the East Indies, Australia and China Seas, and it was proposed that Australia (with some temporary assistance from Imperial funds) should provide the Australian Unit. In peace time, and while on the Australian Station, the Unit would be under the control of the Commonwealth as regards movements and general administration, but when placed by the Commonwealth at the disposal of the Admiralty in war time the vessels would be under the naval Commander-in-Chief. A Fleet Unit for Canada was not considered suitable by her representatives on account of her double sea-board. So it was proposed that Canada should make a start with cruisers of the *Bristol* class and destroyers of an improved River class—a part to be sta-



tioned on the Atlantic sea-board, and part on the Pacific. New Zealand preferred to adhere to her policy of direct contribution, but this would be applied to the maintenance of the China Unit.

The gifts of battleships offered firstly by New Zealand, and subsequently also by the Commonwealth, were accepted with the substitution of cruisers of the *Indomitable* type for battleships, one of these to be placed on the China and one on the Australian station.

With regard to South Africa, this Colony was not able to take part in the Conference pending the completion of the arrangements for the Union of South Africa. Meanwhile, the new Union Government would take over the obligation to make the existing contributions to the Navy hitherto paid by Cape Colony and Natal.

The question of Military Defence was also discussed at the Conference, and an important document, prepared by the General Staff, was circulated setting out general principles.

The basis recognized by the Mother-Country was stated to be that for which Sir John Colomb had always contended, viz : <sup>1</sup>

- (a) The maintenance of a Navy which is designed to keep command of the seas.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 15, 18, 44, etc.

- (b) The provision of Territorial Forces for Home Defence.
- (c) The creation of an Expeditionary Force ready to proceed to any threatened part of the Empire.

It was observed, however, that in the Oversea Dominions no organization had yet been devised for rendering assistance to other parts of the Empire in an emergency, and it was suggested that the time had arrived when the important question should be considered. It was recommended that, without impairing the control of the Government of each Dominion over the military forces raised within it, these forces should be standardized; the formation of units, the arrangements for transports, the patterns of weapons, etc., being as far as possible assimilated to those in the British Army. While the troops would be for the defence of each Dominion, it would thus be made practicable to mobilize and use them for the defence of the Empire in an emergency, so that a homogeneous Imperial Army might be formed.

The Military Conference entrusted the details to a sub-Conference presided over by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff<sup>1</sup> (Sir W. Nichol-

<sup>1</sup> The Imperial General Staff was brought into existence at the 1907 Conference, see p. 149.

son), who acted in this capacity for the first time. Complete agreement was reached and the conclusions were approved by the main Conference and by the Committee of Imperial Defence, which sat for the purpose presided over by the British Prime Minister.

The development of the movement towards Co-operation in Naval Defence on the part of Canada may now be shortly considered. It will have been seen that, notwithstanding the opposition of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to Canada taking an active part in any scheme to secure the maritime supremacy of the British Empire, clearly shown at the Conferences of 1902 and 1907, the patriotic action of New Zealand, and afterwards of the Commonwealth, forced the matter into the open, and obliged Sir Wilfrid to take some practical step in the direction of Canadian participation in naval defence. While anxious to conciliate the French Canadians, the Dominion Premier saw clearly that any further shuffling with the naval question would antagonize many of his own supporters, while at the same time it would hand over a powerful weapon to the Opposition, ably led by Mr. R. L. Borden—a statesman as thoroughly imbued as Sir Wilfrid Laurier with Canadian national ideals, but with a far wider range of vision, and a firm conviction



that the destiny of Canada lay in a full and complete partnership with the other sister-States of the Empire.

On January 12, 1910, therefore, Sir Wilfrid Laurier introduced the Canadian Naval Service Bill into the Dominion House of Commons. The Bill provided for the creation of a naval force to be composed of a permanent corps, a reserve force, and a volunteer force, on the same pattern as the organization of the Canadian Militia force. It may be mentioned that under the Militia Act the whole male population of Canada, from the age of 17 to that of 60, is liable to military service, and, in case of emergency, the whole male population may be called upon for service. The Naval Bill differed in the respect that men would only be enrolled by voluntary engagement, there being no compulsion and no balloting. The naval force would be under the Department of Marine and Fisheries, with a Director of Naval Service to supervise and a Naval Board to advise. Commissions in the naval militia would issue in the name of the King, and a Naval College on the lines of the Kingston Military College was foreshadowed, while discipline would be in accordance with the King's Regulations.

With regard to the important question of control in peace and war, the force would be

under the control of the Canadian Government, but, in case of emergency, the Governor-General-in-Council might place the force on "active service" and at the disposal of His Majesty for general service with the Royal Navy. If such action were taken at a time when Parliament was not sitting, it was provided that Parliament should immediately be called together.

As previously mentioned, the Canadian Government at the 1909 Conference did not accept the Admiralty plan of a Naval Unit<sup>1</sup> in the Pacific, but afterwards determined to accept a proposition to construct 11 ships, viz., 4 *Bristols*, 1 *Boadicea*, and 6 Destroyers, placing part of the force on the Atlantic and part on the Pacific.

While the Premier's proposals were attacked by Mr. F. D. Monk (a French Conservative who supported Mr. Borden in practically everything but his naval policy) and other French Canadians as going too far in committing Canada to "Imperial" action, they were criticized by Mr. Borden and Mr. George E. Foster as being in many respects the negation of Imperial Unity.

<sup>1</sup> The eminent and eloquent Conservative leader, the Hon. George E. Foster, M.P. (now Minister for Trade and Commerce in the Canadian Cabinet), in a masterly speech in the Canadian House of Commons on February 3, 1910, referred to Canada's contribution to the debates at the Defence Conference as showing her "pitiable" position.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier had observed, in reply to a question, that "when Britain is at war, Canada is at war," but he subsequently whittled this away by declining to say that Canada should take part in all the wars of England. She would be guided by circumstances of which the Canadian Parliament was the judge. Upon this, Mr. Borden declared that the proposition that the rest of the Empire might be at war while Canada was at peace was an impossible one, and that if, in time of war, the Canadian Government did not place the Canadian Navy under the control of the Imperial authorities "it would amount to a declaration of independence." He emphasized his position by moving a resolution that the proposals did not follow the suggestions of the Admiralty, and, in so far as they empowered the Government to withhold the naval forces of Canada from those of the Empire in time of war, were ill-advised and dangerous. The Resolution further stated that such proposals could not safely be accepted unless they thoroughly ensured unity of organization and of action, without which there could be no effective co-operation in any common scheme of Empire Defence, and that, while the proposals involved heavy outlay, they would give no effective aid to the Empire and no satisfactory results to Canada.



Mr. Borden wound up by proposing that Canada in the present crisis should offer such an amount as would construct two battleships or armoured cruisers of the latest "Dreadnought" type, giving to the Admiralty full discretion to expend the sum for naval defence as, in their judgment, might best serve to increase the united strength of the Empire.

The above-mentioned Resolution was, naturally, defeated on a Division, but in the course of the many lengthy discussions which took place in the Canadian Parliament on the naval proposals, Mr. Borden managed to elicit from the Premier the statement that if the Governor-General-in-Council <sup>1</sup> did not make any order to place the Canadian ships at the disposal of His Majesty in war, then the Canadian Navy would take no part in the war. Mr. Borden at once seized upon this position, and pointed out that Canadian ships during a war in which the Empire was engaged would presumably be flying the British flag, and, if so, they would be subject to attack. He wanted to know whether such a ship, on meeting one of the enemy, would fight. To this Sir Wilfrid Laurier replied that he did not know that she would or should fight, and added "she should not fight until the Government by which

<sup>1</sup> In practice, the Canadian Cabinet.

she is commissioned have determined whether she should go into the war," upon which Mr. Borden commented: "The position of the Prime Minister is that ships flying the British flag should meet an enemy on the high seas and not attack them. That is a new position for the British Navy."<sup>1</sup>

In short, Mr. Borden's position was that in a war of the Empire the Canadian naval force ought to be classed exactly in the same category as the other forces of the Empire, and that was the only workable theory on which a scheme could be devised for maintaining a great Naval Force of the Empire, if the Empire was to hold together.

When the Second Reading of the Bill came before the Senate, the Hon. J. A. Lougheed, Opposition Leader, declared "the logical result of a Canadian Navy must be to produce in Canada

<sup>1</sup> The illogical position of Sir Wilfrid Laurier was recognized by even advanced Canadian Nationalists, who were strongly opposed to Canada doing anything in Imperial Defence. Mr. Olivar Asselin, one of the most brilliant fighting lieutenants of Mr. Bourassa, issued a pamphlet in April, 1910, in which he asked: "Could anything, for instance, be more illogical than to acknowledge a military duty to the Mother-Country on the part of the Colonies, and at the same time reserve the right for the latter to say when and how that duty shall be performed?"

ultimately a severance from Great Britain," and argued that it would have been better to make a direct grant to Britain, and then discuss a Federal Defence Committee of the Empire.<sup>1</sup>

The Naval Service Bill continued to be the chief subject of discussion, not only in Parliament, but throughout the Press and on every public platform of the Dominion.

Mr. Bourassa, the Leader of the French Canadian Nationalists, joined with Mr. Monk in attacking any policy, such as that of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, which would "draw them into distant wars, foreign to Canada, so long, at least, as the self-governing Colonies of the Empire shall not enjoy with the Mother-Country, and upon equal footing, the sovereign power and authority." The French Canadian attitude, while vigorously opposing anything in the nature of "Imperialism," appeared, as always, to be just as opposed to a policy of annexation to the States, which, it was considered, might mean forfeiting various privileges enjoyed by the Province of Quebec under the British North America Act. So far as can be seen, the attitude was simply one of waiting, and taking no active part in Empire

<sup>1</sup> For further information on this matter, see pp. 207-210, and also pp. 216, 235, 260, etc.



affairs, until the time came to assert Canadian National Independence.<sup>1</sup>

This was a position which Mr. Borden and other Imperialists could not understand. He could understand the ideal of annexation to the United States, or the ideal of independence, but he denounced as inconsistent with self-respect to accept the protection of the British flag and "have every dollar of the cost paid by the overburdened taxpayers of the British Islands." In a fine passage in this connexion, uttered in a speech during the progress of this controversy, Mr. Borden said: "When the Battle of Armageddon comes, when the Empire is fighting for its existence, when our kinsmen of the other great Dominions are in the forefront of the battle, shall we sit silent and inactive while we contemplate with smug satisfaction our increasing crops and products, or shall we, pauper-like, seek fancied but delusive security in an appeal to the charity of some indefinite and high-sounding political doctrine of a great neighbouring nation? No, a thousand times no!"

As to the actual progress of the Canadian naval policy in 1910, two cruisers were purchased

<sup>1</sup> For the position of the extreme advocates of so-called Canadian Nationalism see *The Kingdom Papers*, by John S. Ewart, published at Ottawa,

by the Canadian Government (*Niobe* and *Rainbow*) and Rear-Admiral Kingsmill was appointed Director of Naval Service, with a Naval Staff at Ottawa, while it was announced that the new Naval College at Halifax would be opened in 1911. An Imperial Order in Council transferred the Naval Station at Halifax to the Canadian Government on October 13, 1910, and the formal transfer of Esquimalt was completed on November 9 of the same year.

Meantime, much private negotiation was proceeding between the Admiralty and the representatives of the Australian Government as to the conditions of the Australian Navy. Various matters which, naturally, could only occur to those who had experience both of naval matters and foreign affairs, had not been thought of by the Australian representatives. Practically the same remark applies to the negotiations with Canada, and it was almost surprising, considering the difficulties, that even so satisfactory an agreement as that recorded at the Imperial Conference of 1911 was brought about.

At the 1911 Conference the results of the negotiations between the British Admiralty and the representatives of Canada and Australia <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is to be observed that at the 1911 Conference the Australian Commonwealth was represented by its Premier,

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were given, from which it will be seen that some sort of working arrangement was made possible.

It was agreed that the Naval Services and forces of the Dominions should be under the exclusive control of their respective Governments, but that the training and discipline should be generally uniform with that of the Fleet of the United Kingdom, and officers and men should be interchangeable. The ships should fly the white ensign at the stern and the distinctive flag of the Dominion at the jack-staff, while the Canadian and Australian Governments should have their own naval stations.

To meet the difficulty of Canadian or Australian ships proceeding about the seas, and possibly into foreign ports, unknown to the Admiralty, and to the danger of negotiations which might be in progress between the Foreign Office and one or more of the Great Powers, it was provided that the Dominion Governments would notify the Admiralty if they desired to send ships outside their stations, while with regard to entry into foreign ports, those Governments would first obtain the concurrence of the Imperial Government. The officer in command

Mr. Andrew Fisher, who took office as head of a Labour Administration in succession to Mr. Alfred Deakin, the Leader of the Liberal Party.



of a Dominion ship at a foreign port would report proceedings to the Commander-in-Chief on the station or to the British Admiralty, and he would obey any instructions from the Government of the United Kingdom as to the conduct of international matters, the Dominion Government being informed. If a Dominion ship were to be forced by weather or unforeseen emergency to enter a foreign port, the Commander would report in the same way and be subject to the same conditions of obedience, etc., as if previous arrangement had been made.

Upon ships of the British Admiralty and the Dominions meeting, the senior officer would have the right to command in matters of ceremony, but he would have no power to direct the movements of ships unless the ships were ordered to co-operate by mutual arrangement.

Other matters agreed upon had relation to the loan of officers and men by the Admiralty, to the determination of questions of seniority by the date of Commissions in British, Canadian or Australian Services, and to Fleet exercises for ships of the Dominions under the senior naval officer. The Dominions applied to their forces the King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions and the Naval Discipline Act.

In time of war, if the Naval Service of a

Dominion were put at the disposal of the Imperial Government, the ships would form an integral portion of the British Fleet and would remain under the control of the Admiralty during the continuance of the war.<sup>1</sup>

A Committee of the Imperial Conference dis-

<sup>1</sup> As regards the progress of the Australian Fleet Unit since the 1911 Imperial Conference, it may be observed that the second reading of the Naval Agreement Bill was moved in the Commonwealth House of Representatives on September 5, 1912. From the information there afforded it appeared that delay had taken place in the construction of the ships of the Australian Fleet Unit, though it was expected the *Melbourne* would be ready by January, 1913, and the *Australia* and the *Sydney* a few months later. The cruiser *Brisbane* is being assembled in Australia. With regard to the recruiting of men, it was originally thought that the men recruited in Australia for service in the ships of the Imperial Squadron would be available to form the nucleus crews of the Australian Fleet Unit. Unfortunately, however, the recruiting did not meet with the success anticipated, with the result that the number of men available to man the vessels would not be sufficient when the ships were ready for service. So the aid of the Imperial Government was sought for a training ship and loan of officers and men. The Admiralty placed the *Encounter* at the disposal of the Australian Government with the nucleus of a crew and officers for the training of Australian crews. The cost of the *Encounter* to the Australian Government will be £25,000, and as the subsidy of £200,000 per annum has still to be paid under the Agreement of 1903 till the Australian Squadron shall be relieved by the Australian Fleet Unit, the amount really payable by Australia will be the £200,000 less £25,000, viz. £175,000.

cussed Military affairs and recorded that a Canadian section of the Imperial General Staff was in process of formation, while the constitution of the Commonwealth section, as organized in August, 1909, was given. The New Zealand section of the Staff was organized in December, 1910, and it was stated that the Government had applied for the services of four more General Officers. In South Africa, owing to political change, it was not possible to gauge the requirements of the Union Defence Forces.

The subjects being dealt with by the local General Staffs were :

1. Local Defence.
2. The Training of troops on lines similar to those now followed for the United Kingdom by the Training Directorate of the War Office.

It had been agreed at the Conferences of 1907 and 1909 that the education of officers was the bedrock of the formation of Imperial Military Organization, and the 1911 Conference was able to record satisfactory progress towards uniformity in the education of officers throughout the Empire.

But it will be seen from the foregoing that no definite step has yet been taken towards establishing a binding obligation upon any portion



of the military forces of the Oversea Dominions to hold themselves in readiness to serve in any part of the world, with the Regular forces of the United Kingdom, in a single Imperial Army. While the arrangements now completed would undoubtedly facilitate co-operation in the field between the United Kingdom forces and those volunteering from the Dominions, it is clear that the Empire cannot rely upon any certain quota of men from a Dominion to act in any real scheme of Imperial Organization. From all that has been recorded in this and the last chapter, it will have been made quite manifest that any such binding obligation would be looked upon by the growing nations as an encroachment upon their autonomy; and, therefore, before anything can be done, a system of Imperial Representation must be established in which the Dominions may have an effective voice in the control of the Imperial forces and in the decision of matters of peace and war.

For the same reason, it could not be expected that the 1911 Conference would record any advance in the direction of agreement to place Dominion ships automatically under the control of the Admiralty in time of war. Without giving the Dominions some definite share in the control of ships, by constituting, possibly, an

Imperial Board of Admiralty, and without giving them a voice in the Foreign Policy of the Empire which might involve them in war, it was not to be expected that the great sister-nations could agree to their vessels being taken away from them on the declaration of war by the United Kingdom, who, after all, was only one of the partners in "John Bull and Company."

In 1912, having assumed office as Prime Minister of Canada, in consequence of the defeat of Sir W. Laurier at the 1911 General Election, Mr. R. L. Borden visited England, with three other members of his Cabinet, in order to confer with the Home Government on the question of Naval Defence. Mr. Borden and his colleagues attended sittings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and the oversea Ministers had the situation both as regards the Navy and Foreign Affairs put before them in detail. As a result, the Canadian Premier asked that a Memorandum should be prepared by the Admiralty for the consideration of the Cabinet on his return to Canada. This was done, and the Memorandum, which was forwarded in October, 1912, in the course of reviewing the international position, pointed out that the development of the German Fleet was the most striking feature of the naval situation.

By way of illustration it was mentioned in

the Memorandum that whereas in 1898 the German Fleet consisted of 9 battleships (excluding coast-defence vessels), 3 large cruisers, 28 small cruisers, 113 torpedo-boats, and 25,000 men, maintained at an annual cost of £6,000,000, the full fleet of 1920 would consist of 41 battleships, 20 large cruisers, 40 small cruisers, 144 torpedo boats, 72 submarines, and 101,500 men, estimated to be maintained at an annual cost of £23,000,000. It was, however, observed that the figures gave no real idea of the advance, for Germany had systematically replaced old and small ships by the most powerful and costly vessels, and consequently for the German Navy, with such a large proportion of new ships, the cost of maintenance and repair was much less than in longer established Navies.<sup>1</sup>

Having proved by facts and figures that the naval expansion of Germany was not provoked by British naval increases, the Memorandum went on to show that it had been necessary within the past decade to concentrate the Fleet mainly in Home waters. For instance, in 1902 there were 160 British vessels in the oversea stations,

<sup>1</sup> For a clear exposition by a leading authority of the effect of the rise of the war power of Germany upon Great Britain, see *Britain at Bay*, by Spenser Wilkinson (London : Constable & Co.).



while in 1912 there were only 76. No doubt that was a circumstance which might create some disquietude in the minds of inhabitants of the Empire resident oversea, but the Admiralty laid down once more the proposition so constantly insisted upon by Sir John Colomb, viz., that it is the general naval supremacy of Great Britain, enabling her to drive from the seas the strongest hostile Navy wherever it may be found, which is the primary safeguard of the security and interests of the great Dominions. Having observed that the overseas trade of Canada, amounting in 1909-10 to £72,000,000, and the Canadian vessels, amounting in tonnage to 718,000 tons, were dependent upon the Imperial Navy, without contribution or cost to Canada, the Memorandum wound up with a reply to the Canadian Prime Minister's inquiry as to the most effective immediate aid the Dominion could offer by stating the view that such aid should include the provision of a certain number of the largest and strongest ships of war which science could build or money supply.

As a consequence, Mr. Borden made his historic statement in the Canadian House of Commons on December 5, 1912, when he asked the Dominion Parliament to vote £7,000,000 for the immediate construction of three battleships,

which would be the most powerful in the world, and be at the disposal of the Imperial Government for the common Defence of the Empire, as part of the Royal Navy. The ships, therefore, would be maintained and controlled by the Admiralty, but if, in the future, the Dominion established a Canadian Unit of the Fleet, Mr. Borden stated that the ships might, with reasonable notice, be called by the Canadian Government to form part of the Unit, and would then be maintained by the Dominion.

With regard to the question of a Canadian Navy, the Prime Minister asked whether there was really any need that "we should undertake the hazardous and costly experiment of building up a naval organization specially restricted to Canada, when upon just and self-respecting terms we can take such part as we desire in naval defence through the existing naval organization of the Empire."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to say that Mr. Borden's proposals were opposed in the Canadian Parliament by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who reiterated his arguments in favour of a separate Canadian Navy. It is a little difficult to realize that some English newspapers, apparently imperfectly acquainted either with the previous history of the controversy or with the views of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, sought to convey the impression that the ex-Premier's proposals for a Canadian Navy were more "Imperialistic" than Mr. Borden's. They of

As to the terms above referred to Mr. Borden foreshadowed the permanent representation of Canada upon the Committee of Imperial Defence by the presence in London of a Canadian Minister during the whole or a portion of each year.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it happened that three years after the death of Sir John Colomb, the great Dominion of Canada came into line with the other over-sea nations in making her contribution towards the Naval Defence of the Empire, and on a scale commensurate with her position as the oldest and greatest of the self-governing Dominions of the Crown. Indeed, it may be said that, after standing out so long, Canada has now gone much further than any other Dominion, for she has recognized on a great scale the principle so urgently maintained by Sir John Colomb, in all his advocacy, that the single control of the Navy is essential to effective defence, and that the

course ignored the fact that Sir Wilfrid Laurier showed no desire that Canada should aid the Empire in an emergency by adding strength to the Royal Navy in the manner most in accord with the dictates of the threatening naval situation, but sought to establish a few ships in Canadian waters which would only go to war at the command of the Canadian Parliament.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. suggestion of Imperial Federation League special Committee on p. 207.



only really effective contributions to the Empire's strength in war must be to an Imperial Navy whose ships can be moved to any part of the world, in accordance with the demands of the naval situation.

But it must not be forgotten that this fine contribution of Canada is in the nature of an emergency contribution, for Mr. Borden always recognized during his 1912 visit, and in the course of his speech proposing the vote, that anything in the nature of a definite and permanent obligation, undertaken by Canada in the Naval Defence of the Empire, should be accompanied by adequate representation in Imperial councils.

While Mr. Borden recognized to the full the marked gain to Canada in having a permanent representative on the Committee of Imperial Defence<sup>1</sup> which had necessarily to consider foreign policy and foreign relations, he distinctly referred to this important step as being taken "pending a final solution of the question of voice and influence," when, of course, Canada and the other Dominions would be able to exercise their legitimate share of control of foreign policy corresponding to their assumption of responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> This step, as will be seen from a perusal of other chapters, was advocated for many years by Sir John Colomb. See pp. 14, 36, 61, 207.

It comes about, therefore, that in the problem of permanent defensive co-operation between the home and oversea communities, the words written by Sir John Colomb in the introduction to his work *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain* in 1879<sup>1</sup> are as true to-day as when they were penned, viz., "the whole problem of defence resolves itself in practice into one of cost, cost in its turn resolves itself into one of taxes, and, as taxes cannot be separated from representation, we are at once brought face to face with the naked fact that Imperial Representation lies at the root of the problem of Imperial Defence."

The next chapter, therefore, will be devoted to the discussion of the progress and possible developments of the Imperial Constitution which must inevitably prove so vital to the future of Imperial defensive organization.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 80 of *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*.







**IMPERIAL      REPRESENTATION—PAST  
PROGRESS AND FUTURE DEVELOP-  
MENT**



## CHAPTER V

### IMPERIAL REPRESENTATION — PAST PROGRESS AND FUTURE DEVELOP- MENT

*“The constitutional aspects so govern the whole situation that no really adequate or complete system of co-operative action, on a sufficiently wide basis, can be devised, pending solution of the difficulties they present.”—SIR JOHN COLOMB.<sup>1</sup>*

Imperial Representation the Crux of the Question.—Absence of suggestions from Home Statesmen.—Admiralty and Cash Contributions.—Political Difficulty.—Control of Separate Fleets.—Imperial Disintegration or Partnership.—Constitutional Voice in Foreign Policy necessary.—Dominions and Foreign Affairs—Sir John Colomb's views.—Offer of Representation essential.—Proposals of Imperial Federation League.—Representation on Committee of Imperial Defence—Views of Lord Esher, Colonel Seely, and Mr. Borden.—Mr. Chamberlain and Federal Council.—Development of Imperial Conference as a Representative Assembly.—Sir Frederick Pollock's proposals.—The Lyttelton Despatch—Reception by Dominions—Mr. Deakin at 1907 Conference; Proposals for Imperial Secretariat—Opposition by Lord Elgin.—Mr. Harcourt at 1911 Conference, proposal for Standing

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from Memorandum which Sir John Colomb was preparing at the time of his death for submission to the Committee of Imperial Defence.



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Committee.—Bifurcation of Colonial Office.—Sir Joseph Ward's proposal for Imperial Council.—Mr. Asquith on sharing of Authority in Foreign Policy.—Mr. Borden's views thereon.—Mother of Parliaments not truly Imperial.—Lord Milner on Representation in House of Commons.—Constitutional importance of Imperial Conference.—More frequent Meetings necessary.—Reasons for inadequate results at Conferences.—Methods of overcoming Difficulties.—Imperial Commissions.—Parliamentary Committees.—Committee of Foreign Affairs.—An Imperial Board of Admiralty and National Navy Boards.—Opinion of Sir John Colomb.—No Decentralization of Control.—Lord Milner thereon.—Sir John Colomb on Real Partnership offering the only Solution.—Summing up of Proposals.—The Next Step.

It will have been seen from such events as have already been recorded that, when principles of defence have been recognized by the home authorities and put forward for acceptance at the later Conferences, the main difficulty in arriving at an organized system of Imperial Defence has been the absence of any adequate method of Imperial Representation.

Suggestions involving the self-governing States in permanent expenditure for Imperial objects have always been regarded by them as encroaching upon their autonomy, for no definite scheme by which representatives from oversea could give expression to their views in Imperial councils has ever been put before the sister-nations by the home Government, which, up to the present,

has been exclusively responsible for the conduct of Imperial affairs.

Opportunities of promise have occurred, but the statesmen of the United Kingdom have in most cases confined their official utterances to vague generalities, while in others they have assisted in throwing cold water upon suggestions from oversea. The consideration of events will illustrate the truth of this assertion; and it is almost inconceivable that if politicians at home are really alive to the greatness of the issues involved, they will continue much longer to ignore the vital problem, beside which the bickerings of party politicians and the issues of party strife sink into appropriate insignificance.

That the problem of Representation lies at the root of any organized system of Imperial Defence was realized long ago by such clear thinkers as Sir John Colomb, and though the constitutional side of the closer union movement did not occupy so great a share of his attention as that of defence, yet he never failed to emphasize the impossibility of arriving at any satisfactory solution without recognizing the oversea claim to a real partnership in Imperial concerns. The last Conferences have seen a deliberate shirking of the issues by the politicians at home, and the Admiralty have been left to try and construct schemes of strategic

excellence which have ignored the most elementary and fundamental political facts. It was scarcely surprising that distinguished naval administrators, anxious for the greatest professional efficiency, should omit to place political aspirations in the forefront of their schemes, and, not being politicians, their imagination did not take them beyond suggestions that the Oversea States should provide either cash contributions to the support of the Imperial Navy, controlled by the United Kingdom, or ships which should be placed under the control of the Admiralty in time of war.

While the oversea self-governing States were in reality "Colonies," and had not fully developed a national consciousness, the simplest method of assistance was undoubtedly "cash contributions" to the Navy, for the amounts contributed were too small to raise the matter of representation in a practical way; but with the growth of the Dominions into great communities, with interests in all parts of the world, it was inevitable that they should demand a recognition of equality of political status by the United Kingdom directly they were prepared to assume a substantial share of the Imperial burden, and the basis of this is undoubtedly joint control both of the Imperial Forces which all would provide, and of Imperial Policy in which all would be equally interested.



The attitude of the statesmen guiding the destinies of Canada and Australia has been sufficiently indicated in the last chapter, and it is merely necessary to say here that the tendency manifested in the direction of not only establishing separate Fleets but of keeping such control over them as possibly to withhold them from action when the Empire is at war, may, in course of time, be followed by other Dominions, and will inevitably make for Imperial disintegration unless adequate measures are taken to provide for an effective Imperial partnership. Though earnest efforts were undoubtedly made before the 1911 Conference to arrive at a working scheme, by means of which the Navies of the Dominions and the United Kingdom could co-operate to the fullest extent, yet the fact must be fairly faced that there is no policy more calculated to emphasize any divergence of interests than that which contemplates the possibility of one part of the Empire remaining at peace while the rest of the Empire is at war. In short, the single control of the Navy in time of war is the bed-rock of Imperial unity, and the life-long struggle of Sir John Colomb would, indeed, have been waged in vain if the recognition of this great principle were abandoned now.

But, at the same time, it must also be recognized, and to an extent even greater than during

the life-time of Sir John Colomb, that the great Oversea States, with their ever-widening spheres of international activity, must either be systematically consulted upon matters concerning the disposition of the Imperial Forces, and also upon the policy which may lead to war, or they will be forced, in their own interests, to maintain a complete control over such forces as they provide, and develop their individual relationships with foreign Powers. It has become increasingly apparent, even if the discussions at each Imperial Conference are alone considered, that the illogical position in which the oversea nations are placed through having no recognized constitutional voice in regulating the Foreign Policy of the Empire, cannot continue indefinitely; and though many amateur schemes for obviating the injustice of excluding some thirteen millions of our fellow-subjects from the Imperial Franchise have, from time to time, been put forward, no British statesman of the front rank has yet thought fit to propose any matured solution of this difficult problem, even for discussion, at an Imperial Conference.

In the hope, therefore, that some consideration of the most authoritative schemes hitherto put forward for giving the Dominions a voice in Foreign Policy may assist in developing suggestions upon a really constructive basis, it is proposed to

examine shortly the progress of thought in regard to the question which past chapters have shown to be fundamental. Before doing so, however, it would be well to recall how closely the Oversea States have been associated from time to time with foreign countries in the guidance of events which have had an important bearing upon their destinies as nations.

The influence exercised by the Dominions upon the foreign relations of the Empire was always regarded by Sir John Colomb as a factor of great importance in the situation, and the growth of commercial and other interests in this connexion was considered by him as likely to prove embarrassing to closer union unless the great States of the Empire were associated in a constitutional way with the United Kingdom in regulating policy in addition to sharing responsibility. Dealing with this aspect of the position he wrote in 1902 :<sup>1</sup> " It is not surprising, then, that these great British commercial communities have claimed and obtained a voice in the framing of British commercial treaties with foreign nations. For example, Colonial pressure on the Mother-Country compelled her ' to denounce ' her treaties with the Empire of Germany and the Kingdom

<sup>1</sup> *British Dangers*, " The Warnings of Peace," p. 36.



of Belgium. Nor do such claims now stop at commercial treaties. They have already pushed home with effect in wider fields of international affairs." In illustration, it is only necessary to point to such matters as the New Hebrides question as affecting our relations with France; the Australian Immigration Restriction Bill as affecting Japan; the Costa Rica Packet case, which occasioned serious differences between the Governments of Holland and New South Wales; the Newfoundland Fishery question as creating a difficult situation with France; the Behring Sea and seal dispute, and the Alaskan Boundary question which brought Canada and the United States into contact. All these and similar matters, as Sir John Colomb pointed out, "tell the same tale of ever-advancing Colonial insistence to share in shaping British Foreign Policy."

It would, indeed, be easy to multiply instances of the growing influence of the Oversea Dominions in foreign affairs, which would show how obviously possible it is for the United Kingdom to be drawn into a war in which she is not directly concerned in order to defend some interest of an Oversea State. That the circumstances were striking, even so far back as 1892, is proved by the fact that the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, declared in a speech in March of that year that

“ Our Foreign Policy has become a Colonial Policy, and is in reality more dictated from the extremities of the Empire than from London itself.”

While it is true, therefore, that the influence of the Dominions in the foreign affairs of the Empire is often most potent, and, on occasion, has, it must be admitted, proved inconvenient owing to the absence of corresponding responsibility, yet the omission to provide a constitutional means for making the voices of the Dominions heard in the councils which determine policy is a source of legitimate grievance to oversea statesmen, and has afforded a powerful argument for those in the Dominions who wish to avoid taking a share in a scheme of Empire Defence. Ideas on the subject have, therefore, circulated in a kind of vicious circle. Some have said that there can be no proper share in defence until control of foreign affairs is given, others that there can be no control of foreign affairs till a proportionate share is taken in providing for the Empire's defence, and this, indeed, in such a manner that the central authority can rely upon certain forces being in readiness to enforce the will of the Empire in war. There can, however, be no real doubt that “ the cost of naval defence and the responsibility for the conduct of foreign

affairs hang together,"<sup>1</sup> and events have now reached a stage in which an offer of Representation is essential, in order to ensure that any further substantial progress shall be made towards an organized system of Imperial Co-operation upon a permanent footing.

It was in November of 1892 that the first serious and considered effort to solve the problem of Imperial Representation was made public by a special Committee of the Imperial Federation League, which was in fact an expert Committee with exceptional qualifications for dealing with such a matter.<sup>2</sup> The Committee, appointed by the League in 1891, sat for a year and collected a great amount of valuable material, including the written views of practically every person whose opinion was worth having, and the Report marked a distinct step forward.

In order to secure more complete co-operation in defending the common interests of the Empire, the Committee considered that means should be adopted for more intimate consultation between the great outlying British possessions and the Imperial Cabinet, and to that end it was proposed

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman at Colonial Conference of 1907, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The names of the Members of this Committee, of which Sir John Colomb was one, are given on page 115, note <sup>1</sup>.



that representatives in London of the Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa should be available for consultation with the Cabinet when matters of Foreign Policy affecting the Colonies were under consideration. The Committee submitted that a Council of Defence of the Empire should be constituted, which should consist of representatives of the United Kingdom in the persons of the Prime Minister, the Secretaries for Foreign Affairs, War, Colonies, and India (the two last-named also representing the interests of India and the Crown Colonies), the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and of the representatives of the three groups of self-governing Colonies in North America, Australasia, and South Africa. It was considered that the Council might deal with Imperial Defence somewhat on the lines of the Naval and Military Council contemplated by the Hartington Commission,<sup>1</sup> and that it should receive such information relating to matters of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 30. It will have been seen that a Council of the above nature proposed by the Hartington Commission is now in existence as the Committee of Imperial Defence, and that while representatives of the self-governing States have already sat from time to time as members of the Committee, there is now a strong probability that not only Canada but all the self-governing Dominions will appoint permanent representatives to sit on the Committee.

Foreign Policy as would enable it to deal adequately with questions of Defence. It was recommended that the Council should supervise the appropriation of any moneys provided for the Defence of the Empire by the common contribution of the United Kingdom and the Colonies, and regarding the methods of raising such contributions it was agreed that this would probably be left at the outset to the choice of the individual self-governing States. A suggestion was thrown out that future developments might disclose a means of raising contributions upon a uniform basis throughout the Empire by the allocation of special sources of revenue or otherwise. In any case, however, it was laid down that the several amounts should be fixed in the first instance for a term of years by a Conference, but subject to periodical revisions.

It will have been seen that the proposed Council bore a considerable resemblance to the present Committee of Imperial Defence,<sup>1</sup> though the latter, with its expert members, may be said, perhaps, to be more in the nature of a professional body to advise and educate the Executive Government on the relative functions and needs of the two Services. Still, it must be remembered that the Dominions have been brought into intimate rela-

<sup>1</sup> As to the constitution of this Committee see pp. 58 and 81.

tions with the Committee, and their representatives have actually sat upon it as members with every likelihood of doing so regularly in the future;<sup>1</sup> and, undoubtedly, when special sittings have been held to enable representatives of the Dominions to consult on defence matters (as, for example, during the 1911 Conference, and again when Mr. Borden was in England in 1912), full and confidential information regarding foreign affairs has been placed at the disposal of the Committee and the oversea members sitting upon it. Nevertheless, though Lord Esher (an active member of the Committee) apparently believes<sup>2</sup> that complete confidence and free communication between the British and Dominion Prime Ministers on matters of Foreign Policy, combined with constant representation of the Dominions upon the Committee of Imperial Defence, would meet the immediate needs of the future, it would seem difficult to accept the proposition that even frequent meetings of the Defence Committee, and

<sup>1</sup> The formal offer of more continuous representation of the Dominions upon the Committee of Imperial Defence was conveyed to the Oversea Governments by the Colonial Secretary (Mr. Lewis Harcourt) in a despatch dated December 10, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *The Committee of Imperial Defence, its Functions and Potentialities*, by Viscount Esher (London: John Murray).



fairly constant exchange of information by means of despatches between the Prime Ministers of the Empire, can really fulfil the needs of the situation in an effective manner for any length of time. The Committee of Imperial Defence itself can, of course, scarcely be expected to exercise more than an indirect influence upon Foreign Policy, and its functions as an expert advisory body would be somewhat interfered with if an attempt to develop it as an institution mainly fulfilling representative functions were to succeed. For this reason, essential as the presence of Dominion representatives has been, and must be, upon the Committee, it can, in its present form, hardly be said to fill the place of the Constitutional machine necessary for the adequate representation of the Oversea States in the councils of the Empire. The Committee, no doubt, as a factor in the scheme of Imperial evolution, occupies a prominent, and at the moment even a foremost place, but this is in the direction rather of co-ordination of effort than of the gratification of political aspirations.

It is true, however, that certain far-sighted politicians have observed in the Committee of Imperial Defence a means of meeting the situation ; and, undoubtedly, one of the most important proposals made with regard to the development of this Committee was that put forward by the pre-

sent Secretary of State for War, before he took office in the present Liberal Administration. On August 2, 1906, Col. (then Major) Seely initiated a discussion in the House of Commons, and in the course of his remarks argued that it was impossible to have a proper Committee of Imperial Defence unless it included upon it not only representatives of the Colonies and India, but also the representatives of the great political parties in this country. Colonel Seely subsequently developed his ideas on the subject <sup>1</sup> before a private meeting of the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, when he expressed the view that the Colonies resented the changes of opinion which followed the change of party, and for this reason he wished to see a non-party President of the Committee in the person of a Member of the Royal Family, and on the Committee an equal proportion of members of both political parties, so that it would include the present First Lord of the Admiralty and the ex-First Lord, the present Secretary for War and the ex-Secretary, and so on. Further, Colonel Seely wished the self-governing Dominions

<sup>1</sup> The Report of the discussion at this private dinner of the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee held on November 19, 1906, was subsequently printed by the Committee. On this occasion, Major Seely opened the discussion, with Sir John Colomb in the Chair.

to send representatives to reside permanently in this country in order to serve regularly on the Committee, though the Committee would remain advisory and its recommendations would not be enforceable until approved by the respective Parliaments. He thought in this way to overcome to some extent the difficulty of "taxation without representation."

It is interesting to note that Mr. R. L. Borden, when still Leader of the Opposition in the Canadian House of Commons, and shortly before assuming Office as Prime Minister, took a similar view to the above, as regards the non-party character of the representation, in a speech delivered on June 12, 1910. Mr. Borden then expressed the hope that a Defence Committee, or an Imperial Conference having special jurisdiction over defence matters, composed of men from both parties in Great Britain itself as well as in the self-governing nations of the Empire, would have some control over the organization of Imperial Defence; and, as an outcome of such a Committee or Conference, he would expect that in future the United Kingdom would engage in no great war without knowing beforehand that she had the support and sympathy of every one of the self-governing nations of the Empire. This would give to these Dominions a voice in the control of war, because



he thoroughly agreed that if they were to take part in the permanent defence of this great Empire, they must have some control and some voice in such matters.

A difficulty that might seem apparent in regard to Colonel Seely's proposal for the appointment of representatives of the Dominions to permanently reside in London is that they would soon get out of touch with opinion in the State they were representing; and, further than this, it is fairly certain that no Dominion would entrust a person with any real or plenipotentiary powers unless he were a Prime Minister, or at least a Cabinet Minister directly responsible to Parliament. This difficulty can, and probably will, be surmounted by each Dominion agreeing to appoint a Minister for External Affairs<sup>1</sup> whose presence in London could, if necessary, alternate with that of the Prime Minister or Minister for Defence, so that such a Minister could be serving on the Committee while his Parliament was in session and have his place in London taken by the Defence Minister, or Prime Minister, when either could get away to relieve him. In this

<sup>1</sup> Such a Minister exists in Australia, and the creation of one for New Zealand has been advocated for his Dominion by Mr. A. M. Myers, the ex-Minister of Defence for New Zealand.

way both a responsible Minister, and one, moreover, in touch with oversea opinion, could always be available for consultation, which, in the case of Australia and New Zealand is a more real difficulty than in the less remote countries of Canada and South Africa. Indeed, in the case of Canada, it has already been seen<sup>1</sup> that Mr. Borden, speaking as Prime Minister on December 5, 1912, agreed to the presence of a Canadian Minister in London who should be summoned to attend all meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence and be regarded as one of its permanent members, upon the understanding that no important step in Foreign Policy should be undertaken without consultation with the representative of Canada.

While the policy of more intimate connexion between the Defence Committee and the Dominions undoubtedly marks a considerable advance, and will tend to promote uniformity both of preparation and action in defence matters, yet it can only be accepted by oversea statesmen as "pending a final solution"<sup>2</sup> of the question of full Representation, for even information systematically given to oversea statesmen at the meetings of the Defence Committee upon the chief features of Foreign Policy cannot wholly meet

<sup>1</sup> See p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 192.

the legitimate demand for definite constitutional Representation. It would seem that the national instinct in the sister-countries, sensitive to an encroachment on autonomy or to a difference in political status, would not be satisfied with anything short of a direct voice, capable of influencing the course of Imperial policy, in any system which involved a binding obligation to co-operate on all occasions in war.

At the same time the Committee of Imperial Defence has now an established place in the consultative machinery of the Empire, and the recent developments are the outcome of the resolution proposed by Mr. Deakin at the 1907 Imperial Conference, which affirmed that the Colonies should be authorized to refer local matters to the Committee where expert assistance was desirable, and also that whenever desired a representative of the Colony wishing for advice should be summoned to attend as a member of the Committee. Moreover, when the members of the 1911 Imperial Conference attended a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, they agreed upon the desirability of oversea Ministers attending meetings of the Committee, and accepted the principle of establishing local Defence Committees in each Dominion to work in touch with the Committee in London.



Proposals, however, from home statesmen for more intimate connexion with the Dominions in the control of the Navy and in the wider sphere of international relations have, as before pointed out, been either vague or entirely absent.<sup>1</sup> It is true that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain at the Conference of 1897 said it had sometimes struck him that it might be feasible to create a great Council of the Empire to which the Colonies would send not mere delegates, who would be unable to speak without reference to their respective Governments, but representative plenipotentiaries, and expressed his belief that such a body might slowly grow to that Federal Council "to which we must always look forward as our ultimate ideal." Again, at the 1902 Conference, Mr. Chamberlain expressed the willingness of the Home Government to give the Oversea States a corresponding voice in the policy of the Empire directly they were prepared to take a proportionate share of Imperial burdens,<sup>2</sup> and he repeated that a Council of the Empire

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps some qualification is necessary to this statement in view of Mr. Lyttelton's Despatch of April 20, 1905. As will be seen, however, on reference to pages 224 and 229 the proposals contained in the despatch were dropped at the 1907 Conference through the opposition of Lord Elgin and Sir Wilfred Laurier.

<sup>2</sup> See also p. 133.

might be created which would be in the first instance advisory; but he added that the object would not be completely secured until there had been conferred upon such a Council executive functions, and perhaps also legislative powers. However, these suggestions were only tentatively advanced, and in any case the time had not then come for a representative Council. Though the existing political relations were considered by the oversea representatives at the 1897 Conference to be generally satisfactory,<sup>1</sup> the attitude of the majority of the representatives being that a greater share in the direction of Imperial policy would involve a proportionate contribution in aid of Imperial expenditure, for which at that time the Colonies were not prepared,<sup>2</sup> the 1902 Conference took a step in advance by affirming the desirability of holding quadrennial Conferences. In the latter connexion it may now be convenient to consider the evolution of the Imperial Conference itself as a piece of constitutional machinery of a representative character.

It must first be observed that the 1887 Conference differed from its successors in that it was much larger, and those attending it were not

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Seddon and Sir E. N. C. Braddon dissented from this Resolution.

<sup>2</sup> See *Proceedings of 1897 Conference* (C. 8596) at p. 15.

necessarily members of Home and Oversea Governments. Indeed, at the opening meeting, there were some 121 representatives present, including leading public men of various political opinions, and representatives of Crown Colonies. At the meetings where business was actually transacted, however, those taking part were mostly representatives of the self-governing Colonies and of the British State Departments. Although it may be said with a certain amount of truth that the Conference was one between Governments, as all representatives were nominated by Governments, yet it was not so truly "between Governments" as the Conference of 1897,<sup>1</sup> when those assembled together were not only all Ministers of responsible Governments, but were all Prime Ministers and members of the British Privy Council. In a constitutional sense, therefore, this Conference was strictly a Committee of the Privy Council. At the 1902 Conference the representation was again restricted to Governments, but the Prime Ministers were attended by other Ministers who, however, were present at the table

<sup>1</sup> As already observed a Conference took place between 1887 and 1897, viz., in 1894, at Ottawa. The representatives there, however, were really delegates with precise instructions from their Governments to deal with a specific matter, i.e. the Pacific Cable.



only when the subjects in which they were concerned were under discussion. At all these meetings the Colonial Secretary presided, and while he still occupied the chair at the 1907 Conference, the Prime Minister (Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman) was present and addressed the gathering, which, on this occasion, consisted of the oversea Premiers and three of their Ministers, together with certain members of the British Cabinet and their Under-Secretaries. An official welcome by the home Premier had not taken place since 1887, and Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman took occasion to emphasize the fact that, though the Secretary for the Colonies presided, the Conference was one between the Imperial Government and the Premiers and not merely between the Colonial Secretary and the Premiers. It was obvious, however, that the oversea Premiers, and notably Mr. Deakin, wished it made clear that the representatives met upon an equality of political status, the only difference between them being as to "seniority and scope," and a most important step in this direction was taken by the appointment of the British Prime Minister as *ex-officio* President of the Conference.

In the Resolution providing for the above and also for the calling of subsidiary Conferences, in order to deal with such matters as could not be

conveniently postponed<sup>1</sup> till the next Session, it is important to note that the word "Colonies" as a designation for the Oversea States was abandoned in favour of "His Majesty's Dominions beyond the Seas," though this was certainly not welcomed by the Colonial Secretary<sup>2</sup> (Lord Elgin), who was very much in the hands of the permanent officials at the Colonial Office, as will be seen again hereafter.

With regard to the attendance of other Ministers, accompanying the Prime Ministers, it was agreed, as an understanding, that such Ministers should be present in order to assist the Premiers, and that not more than one should give this help at the same meeting. The possible attendance of one of the High Commissioners was considered and the idea negatived, so the Conference was maintained as one strictly between Governments.

This position was still further emphasized at the Conference of 1911, when all the Prime Ministers were present (Mr. Botha representing the new Union Government of South Africa instead of the Transvaal merely, as in 1907) accompanied by their Ministerial colleagues; and the

<sup>1</sup> The Defence Conference of 1909 was called in pursuance of this Resolution (see p. 165).

<sup>2</sup> See speech at the Corona Club, reported in *The Times* of June 20, 1907.

British Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) took the Chair for the first time as President. Also for the first time the Conference assumed its name (as agreed to at the 1907 Session) of "Imperial Conference," instead of "Colonial Conference" as on previous occasions.

It will thus be seen that the Conference gradually clothed itself with a definite Constitution, and, meeting at regular intervals, was able to hold actual Sessions, when its members conferred on such matters of mutual interest as Defence, Commercial Relations, Shipping, Imperial Appeal Court, Uniformity of Laws, Trade and Postal Communications, Naturalization, etc., etc. Though still purely consultative and possessing no executive power, yet, as the heads of each responsible Government are members of the Conference, a unanimous decision of the body has in effect a binding force throughout the countries of the Empire.

When considering the possible developments of this Conference as a Representative Assembly, it is well to bear in mind the steps that have been attempted to provide it with greater continuity of purpose by bringing into existence a definite organization to work permanently between the sittings. At the beginning of 1903, Sir Frederick Pollock, as a member of the Executive of the



Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, brought before the members of that body the desirability of working out some constructive plan of Imperial organization, and, after consultation with Sir John Colomb (then Chairman of the Executive of the Committee) it was decided that an informal Committee of an independent character, and without even a name, was more suitable for the "tossing of thoughts" in this connexion. Sir Frederick Pollock, therefore, got a number of politicians, officials, and thinkers in various directions together for private discussions, amongst whom Sir John Colomb and Mr. Spenser Wilkinson may be said to have represented defence interests, and Lord (then Mr.) Haldane, Sir Edward Grey, Lord Milner, Professor Westlake, and others the more strictly political and constitutional side. Sir Frederick Pollock collected what he considered to be the result of these discussions and presented it in the form of a paper read to the Royal Colonial Institute in April, 1905. The main suggestion in this paper was for the constitution of an Advisory Council of the Empire in the shape of a Committee of the Privy Council—the nucleus of the Committee existing in the Conference of Premiers which met in 1902. It was suggested that the President of the Committee should be the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, that ex-Ministers

in Opposition should be sometimes summoned to attend, and that the Colonies should be represented by their Prime Ministers or special Ministers. In order to give the Committee a continuous existence between its meetings every four or five years, an Imperial Secretariat and Intelligence Department was advocated with a secretary, attached to the Prime Minister, collecting information through an Imperial Commission whose members would represent all branches of knowledge and research and act mostly through expert Committees dealing with special subjects. It is hardly necessary to say that this latter proposal related to matters of a civil character, as the work of defence in this connexion was already done by the Committee of Imperial Defence to which oversea Ministers were admitted as members.

It is not possible to say exactly how much of the paper represented collective opinion or the individual view of Sir Frederick Pollock, but it will be seen that it revived the idea of an Advisory Council suggested by Mr. Chamberlain. There is no doubt, however, that the views put forward had a direct influence upon the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Alfred Lyttelton (who had succeeded Mr. Joseph Chamberlain), and on April 20, 1905, a despatch was sent to all the Governments of the self-governing Dominions which set forth the

suggestion that, as the Conference had assumed a more definite shape and acquired a more continuous status, the words "Colonial Conference" as the title should be abandoned, and that future meetings should be spoken of as meetings of the "Imperial Council." The idea of the Imperial Commission with an office in London and an adequate secretarial staff was also put before the Dominion Governments.

The response to this despatch on the part of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Cabinet evidenced a profound suspicion of any attempt to interfere with Colonial self-government, and there is no doubt at all that the French-Canadian Premier was influenced in his attitude by the fear, which seemed to be constantly before him, that his compatriots and supporters in French Canada would be bitterly opposed to any measure tending towards the establishment of a Federal Cabinet of the Empire, ultimately, perhaps, possessing executive power. The word "Council" combined with the word "Imperial" seemed to suggest to Canadian Ministers that an attempt was to be made to alter the Conference from an "unconventional gathering for informal discussion" to a "permanent institution" which, "endowed with a continuous life," might encroach upon the autonomous legislative and administrative power enjoyed by the



self-governing Colonies ; and they also thought that the proposed " Commission " might interfere with responsible government.

The Premier of Newfoundland (Sir Robert Bond) considered that a voice in the policy of the Empire meant corresponding responsibilities, and it was " practically impossible " for his colony to make any direct contribution towards Imperial Defence or to grant a trade preference, as revenue was required for " public benefit." The inability to regard defence as a matter of public benefit may perhaps seem a little curious, as a similar position if adopted by the United Kingdom would, as Sir John Colomb so often pointed out, leave the Empire with no defence at all. But the acceptance of responsibility on the part of the United Kingdom for the Defence of the Empire from general attack no doubt led many of the Oversea States to take the provision of their defence by the home country as a matter of course, until they were aroused to the realities of the position by some external danger like the rise of German naval power, which showed that one country could not for all time bear the burden of the defence of the whole Empire.

The attitude of the other Oversea Governments towards the Lyttelton despatch was generally favourable, and, though the matter could



not be carried further by Mr. Lyttelton before the next Conference, owing, firstly, to the opposition of Canada, and secondly to the resignation of the Balfour Administration in 1905, Mr. Deakin, on behalf of Australia, gave notice of a Resolution for the 1907 Conference which clearly reflected the influence of the Pollock Committee<sup>1</sup> and the proposals of the Unionist Colonial Secretary. This Resolution affirmed the desirability of establishing "an Imperial Council, consisting of representatives of Great Britain and the self-governing Colonies, chosen *ex-officio* from their existing administrations." It was further set out in the Resolution that such a Council should establish a system by which its members should be kept informed between the Conferences as to matters which had been or might be subjects for discussion,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederick Pollock went on with his efforts to work out a scheme for giving greater "continuity" to the Conference, and though the Advisory Council idea was practically dropped, a Memorandum embodying the ideas of Sir Frederick and his co-workers was issued in March of 1907 and signed by Sir John Colomb, Lord Milner, Sir G. S. Clarke, Mr. W. P. Reeves and others. This Memorandum suggested the permanent representation of the Colonial Governments in London with a Secretariat and a permanent secretary and efficient staff. An Intelligence Department with a permanent Royal Commission as an adjunct was also advocated. See page 223,

and that a permanent secretarial staff should be charged with the duty of obtaining information for the use of the Council, attending to the execution of its Resolutions and conducting correspondence. The expenses of the staff should be borne by the countries represented on the Council in proportion to their populations.

When the Conference of 1907 opened under the Chairmanship of Lord Elgin (the new Liberal Colonial Secretary), Mr. Deakin first dealt with the proposal to change the name of the Conference to "Imperial Council," and stated that the Australian Government was prepared to mark its appreciation of the intention of Mr. Lyttelton's despatch by adopting the title. Upon learning the view of the Canadian members, however, Mr. Deakin accepted the title of "Imperial Conference," and he then proceeded to argue in favour of an Imperial Secretariat which should provide a means of consultation for the various members of the Conference in the intervals between the meetings. By this means questions likely to be dealt with might be examined some time ahead, and all necessary inquiries made and views exchanged. Touching the use of such a Secretariat in relation to foreign affairs, Mr. Deakin said :—

"At the present time any communication on those matters is indirect of necessity, but it is



also impeded by other considerations. We may appear officious ; we may appear to be assuming without sufficient knowledge that some communication of ours is called for. We desire to be in a position to be able to make such necessary inquiries in regard to foreign politics as may appear to us to be urgent and important, to make them direct, to obtain a reply, and if that reply appears to us to embody any principle, to communicate through such a Secretariat with the self-governing communities, asking that they be placed in possession of the same information in order that they may consider whether, in the interests of their own people, they too should not communicate direct with the Government of this country in whom the whole control of foreign affairs and defence rests."

Mr. Deakin wished to see the Secretariat directly under the control of the Imperial Conference, and suggested that it was desirable that the Colonial Office should be, in the future, what it was at its commencement, simply the Office for the Crown Colonies. The communications from the self-governing Colonies would thus go through another channel to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom direct. This idea was opposed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who considered the Colonial Office was the proper Department to deal with

the self-governing Colonies or the Crown Colonies, but Dr. Jameson supported and elaborated the proposal, stating that his idea of the Secretariat was that each of the Colonies should appoint its representatives upon it, the Prime Minister of England also being represented.

This attempt to recognize the equality of political status of the countries of the Empire, and to provide the Conference with efficient machinery, received its quietus from Lord Elgin, who, having no doubt been shown by the officials of the Colonial Office that the existence of the Office was threatened by the proposal, adopted the curious position of a champion of the rights of Colonial self-government. He argued that a body interposing in any way between Ministers and the Parliaments to which they were responsible might almost endanger the liberties which ought to be inviolate, and he obtained the help of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman by announcing the Prime Minister's refusal to the suggestion that the Secretariat should be under his control as President of the Conference.

So the effort to establish a system which would place the Oversea Dominions in contact with the Home Government through a really Imperial Office, instead of through a Department controlled by the United Kingdom, was defeated,

and instead the Colonial Office undertook to form a Secretariat themselves. In the terms of the Resolution as finally adopted the permanent secretarial staff was charged "under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies" with the duty of obtaining information for the use of the Conference, and of attending to its Resolutions, etc. No doubt the Secretariat, so far as it has any really separate existence at all, as part of the Dominions Department of the Colonial Office, has since performed its work of corresponding between the Governments, and of referring matters for treatment to the various Departments, with reasonable efficiency; but it is not to be expected that a branch of a British State Department, not representing, or even effectively in touch with, the Oversea States, could initiate or guide effort in the real sense of "getting things done" between the Conferences. The present method is only a makeshift to please the official mind, and can never take the place of the Secretariat proposed by Mr. Deakin, whose officials, appointed and paid by the Governments concerned, would have acted in practice as direct representatives of the Prime Ministers, and have been responsible to the Conference as a whole instead of (under the adopted scheme) to one country, i.e. the United Kingdom. Mr. Deakin



wished both for equality of status of the various countries, and for equality of responsibility in providing the Secretariat, and he wanted to get rid of the arrangement which put the great Dominions virtually in a position of dependence under the Colonial Office, whose methods of administration in connection with the Crown Colonies begot an attitude of mind which gave those in the self-governing States "a general sense of discussing a question with persons who have already made up their minds upon it on another basis altogether."<sup>1</sup> However, the opposition of the Colonial Office and Sir Wilfrid Laurier were sufficient to defeat Mr. Deakin's proposal, the adoption of which would have proved undoubtedly an important step in the evolution towards an Imperial partnership.

While the Conference re-affirmed the Resolution of the 1902 Conference in favour of holding quadrennial Conferences, it also approved the principle of holding subsidiary Conferences, although Sir Wilfrid Laurier at first opposed this too.

At the 1911 Conference, therefore, the newly appointed Colonial Secretary, Mr. Lewis Harcourt, in order to meet what was believed to be

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Deakin's remarks at the Conference (p. 44 of Minutes of Proceedings, Cd. 3523).

a desire on the part of some of the Dominions, put forward a suggestion for an Advisory Standing Committee of the Conference, the idea being that each Oversea Government should appoint a representative upon this Committee which, between the Conferences, would thresh out questions that the Conference itself had not time to go into. In this manner it was thought to prepare the way for the next Conference, and generally to carry on the work between the Conferences. While receiving the support of Sir Joseph Ward for New Zealand, and Mr. Fisher for Australia, the suggestion was opposed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who apprehended that the Committee might interfere between the Home and Oversea Governments, and also by General Botha, who thought it might lead up to that Imperial Council to which he very strongly objected. This suggested Standing Committee would have been essentially a Colonial Office concern, with one of its officials acting as secretary, and it would have carried matters very little further; but owing to the lack of unanimity at the Conference concerning it, the proposal dropped, and so also did the Resolution of South Africa that the Secretariat and all matters relating to the self-governing Colonies should be placed directly under the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The latter suggestion, in fact, was with-

drawn as the British Prime Minister stated it was impossible for him to accede to it.

The Resolution of New Zealand involving suggestions for separating the Department of the Dominions from that of the Crown Colonies, and the change of the title of the Colonial Secretary to that of "Secretary of State for Imperial Affairs," was met by the Colonial Secretary pointing out the difficulties of "bifurcation" of the Colonial Office, and that the division of the Departments of the Office below the permanent Under-Secretary was already complete, there being two Assistant Under-Secretaries, one for the Dominions and one for the Crown Colonies, with a full Department under each. In the discussion Mr. Fisher pointed out that "these recognized nations" undoubtedly would feel themselves more and more, as time passed, desirous of entering into the spirit of the policy that governs the Empire, and he threw out the suggestion for more definite consultation between the representatives of the Dominions and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

A comprehensive scheme, however, in connexion with the representation of the Dominions in the affairs of the Empire was put forward at the 1911 Conference by Sir Joseph Ward, who moved a Resolution to the effect that the Empire had reached a stage of Imperial develop-



ment which rendered it expedient that there should be an Imperial Council of State, upon which representatives from all parts of the Empire should act in an advisory capacity to the Imperial Government on all questions affecting their interests. In his speech supporting this suggestion it is to be regretted that Sir Joseph confused the issue by constantly referring to an Imperial Parliament of Defence instead of to an Advisory Council, as in the Resolution. This rendered it difficult for the Conference to vote upon the Resolution itself, for it could not be dissociated from the arguments advanced by the New Zealand Premier in favour of something which appeared quite different from the original proposal. However this may be, Sir Joseph Ward based his arguments on the proposition that "the day for partnership in true Imperial affairs has arrived, and the question which now emerges is upon what basis is that partnership to rest? It certainly cannot rest upon the present relationship." He pointed out that the people of the self-governing dependencies were not yet citizens of the Empire, and he emphasized the need of some Imperial Council to co-ordinate and harmonize the policies of Naval Defence so as to avoid the possibility, under the existing system, of the Empire being at war, and Canada, for example, at

peace. He thought that by means of the Imperial Council the separate naval policies of the two greatest Dominions could be made integral with the Imperial Navy, and that there would be a uniform system of contribution.

Sir Joseph Ward outlined the principles of his scheme as follows: The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Newfoundland should elect an Imperial House of Representatives for Naval Defence for the term of five years, one representative being elected for each 200,000 of their respective populations, i.e. (approximately) the United Kingdom 220, Canada 37, Australia 25, South Africa 7, New Zealand 6, Newfoundland 2, making a total of about 300 Representatives. From these the respective countries would elect two representatives to be an Imperial Council of Defence, this Council thus mustering twelve. The new body should have control of peace and war treaties, foreign relations generally and Imperial Defence (Naval), and the provision of revenues for that purpose. On the first election of this Parliament, it should have no powers of taxation, and the amount payable by each Oversea Dominion, as its proportion of the revenue, should be deemed to be a debt and paid by that Dominion to the Exchequer of the Imperial Parliament of Defence. At the expira-

tion of ten years the amount would be raised in such manner as the Dominions agreed, the Imperial Parliament determining the sum to be contributed (estimated *per capita* of population) for the purpose of Imperial Defence and war, provided that the contribution of the Oversea Dominions should not exceed 50 per cent. of the amount furnished by the United Kingdom. The proposal presupposed that there was local autonomy for the divisions of the United Kingdom, or "Home Rule All Round." Sir Joseph Ward argued that if the Oversea Dominions were to share in the responsibilities, they were entitled, as a matter of right, to have some say, even though they should be in a minority, upon a properly constituted body deciding questions of peace or war.

While the reasons given for the proposals by Sir Joseph Ward were undoubtedly sound, it cannot be denied that the proposals themselves had scarcely been sufficiently thought out or considered in the light of many similar schemes put forward from time to time. It was, therefore, almost inevitable that Sir Joseph should get no support from his colleagues, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier had an easier task than usual in demolishing another attempt at closer union, for he was able to show that the proposal was not an Advisory Council but a legislative body, and one, moreover,



with power to create expenditure but no power to create revenue. Mr. Fisher, however, suggested the idea of an Advisory Council associated with the Imperial Government, in close touch at all times, so that communications might be made to representatives on the spot directly responsible to the Governments of the Dominions.

Mr. Asquith in his reply called attention to the memorial recently presented to him, and signed by about 300 Members of Parliament, stating the view that the time had arrived for associating the Oversea Dominions in a more practical manner with the conduct of Imperial affairs by means of an established representative Council of an advisory character.

The President of the Conference went on to say that the effect of Sir Joseph Ward's proposals would be to impair, if not altogether to destroy, the authority of the Government of the United Kingdom in such grave matters as the conduct of foreign policy, the conclusion of treaties, and the maintenance of peace or the declaration of war. "That authority," declared Mr. Asquith, "cannot be shared," and he added that the co-existence side by side with the Cabinet of the United Kingdom of this proposed body would, in his judgment, be fatal to the system of responsible government.

Having been discussed, the Resolution was

withdrawn; but it is to be observed that the declaration of the British Premier that authority in dealing with foreign affairs could not be shared went much further than the necessities of the case demanded, and, if maintained in the future by the Government of the United Kingdom, such a position would obviously render any scheme of co-operation with the Oversea States impossible of accomplishment. Indeed, this was made clear by Mr. R. L. Borden when introducing his Bill for increasing the Naval Forces of the Empire on December 5, 1912, for he specifically referred to the matter in these grave words: "It has been declared in the past, and even during recent years, that the responsibility for Foreign Policy could not be shared by Great Britain with the Dominions. In my humble opinion adherence to such a position could have but one, and that a most disastrous, result."

The Canadian Premier also observed that during his recent visit to England he had on many public occasions propounded the principle that the great Dominions, sharing in the Defence of the Empire upon the high seas, must necessarily be entitled to share also in the responsibility for and in the control of Foreign Policy. "It is satisfactory to know to-day," he added, "that not only His Majesty's Ministers, but also the leaders of

the opposite political party in Great Britain, have explicitly accepted this principle, and have affirmed their conviction that the means by which it can be constitutionally accomplished must be sought, discovered and utilized without delay."

The total inadequacy of the present so-called Imperial Parliament as a representative Parliament of the Empire was referred to by Mr. Borden during his 1912 visit. Speaking at a dinner of the Empire Parliamentary Association within the walls of the House of Commons itself the eminent Canadian statesman said :—

" At one time this Mother of Parliaments was in truth and in fact an Imperial Parliament in the highest sense. If I understand correctly the conditions of to-day, that status has ceased to exist. A Parliament elected upon issues chiefly, if not altogether, local and domestic, a Parliament which expends so large a portion of its time and energy in discussing and determining questions of purely domestic concern, can hardly be regarded as an Imperial Parliament in the highest or truest sense." <sup>1</sup>

The difficulty of providing any means of adequate representation of the Dominions in a body having effective control of Imperial affairs has induced some to argue in favour of making the

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times* of July 17, 1912.



present House of Commons truly Imperial by giving the Dominions representation within it; and it is interesting to note that a foremost statesman of to-day, and one, moreover, who in matters concerning the Empire possesses probably the widest knowledge and clearest insight, Lord Milner, was at one time in favour of this method. In writing to Sir John Colomb, then Chairman of the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, during his last voyage to the Cape before the outbreak of the war in South Africa, and in reply to a suggestion of Sir John's relating to the contribution of Cape Colony to the British Navy, Lord (then Sir Alfred) Milner wrote :—

“ON BOARD THE *Briton*,

NEARING MADEIRA,

*January 31, 1899.*

“DEAR SIR JOHN COLOMB,—My last ten days in London were so hurried that I had no time to answer your interesting letter of 18th.

“With regard to the particular suggestion made in it, viz., that the speech from the throne at the opening of the Cape Parliament should always contain an appeal to vote money for Imperial Defence, I think it is open to the objection that such money fortunately will not require to be annually voted. The £35,000 a year is secured

*by Act* and will, with only a few other items, be an annual charge on the Revenues of the Colony in permanence and not dependent on a vote of the House.

“But, while I make this remark on your particular suggestion, I am cordially and enthusiastically in accord with the spirit which prompted it, and with the objects of your Committee. I regard the step taken by the Cape Parliament as the most important we have yet seen in the direction of Imperial Federation. The sum is small (I hope to live to see it increased), but the example, especially when set by a Colony which is for the moment suffering from a falling Revenue and severe financial depression, is invaluable and you cannot make too much of it.

“What I am particularly anxious to see is a movement at home to invite the Colonies, who are ready to take a share in the defence of the Empire, to send representatives to the body which controls the spending of that money. If the offer of the money comes from them, the offer of the power should come from us. I know all the objections to Colonial representatives in the House of Commons, but, until you get a really effective Imperial Council, which is still a long way off, I think it is far better to have Colonists in the House of Commons than not to have them at all. Of course,

while you have only one Colony contributing to the general Imperial Fund, and only contributing 1/2000th part of it (I take Imperial expenses, Army, Navy, etc., at roughly 60 millions), it is not possible to start Colonial representation, even in its small beginnings (and it is much better and avoids many difficulties that the beginnings should be small), but it is not too soon to ventilate the idea. It seems to me that if there were only five Members of the House of Commons freely elected by the people of those Colonies, who took a share in supporting the defence of the Empire (say one Member for every £50,000 of contribution, which would be liberal), we should have introduced a principle of great moment which, in time, would transform the present half-local and half-Imperial British Parliament into a true Imperial Assembly supreme as regards Defence and Foreign Policy, and gradually delegating its local duties, either to Committees of local Members, or to new subordinate bodies, a harmless form of Home Rule.

“What I feel is that it is no use us having Colonists to come to any representative body not having *real power*. However small their share of power at first (it must begin small), the *quality* of it should not be inferior, i.e., they should have a voice in the making and unmaking of that central government which has the destinies of the Empire



in its hands, which is the British Ministry. And that Ministry is, in effect, chosen by the House of Commons.

“Please give this your consideration. We shall have a hard battle to fight to get over the objections (*very superficial* as most of them are), but if we could win this trick I believe the game would be ours.

Yours very truly,  
A. MILNER.”

The difficulty, however, of Colonial representation in the House of Commons is that the Home Legislature deals not only with Imperial matters of Defence and Foreign Policy, etc., but also with the domestic affairs of the United Kingdom, and by granting the Dominions representation in the House of Commons, as at present constituted, a voice would be given them in the local legislation affecting the Mother-Country which, of course, would be denied to and not indeed sought by the United Kingdom in the domestic concerns of the Oversea States. A measure of devolution or “Home Rule All Round,” by which local Parliaments would be established for England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, with a central Parliament to deal with the affairs of the United Kingdom and the Empire as a whole, would no doubt go far to

surmount the main difficulty, but many thorny questions have to be solved before this change can come about, or be even attempted with any reasonable prospect of success. Meantime, it behoves all thinkers earnestly to consider in what way the Dominions can be more closely associated with the United Kingdom in the conduct of Imperial affairs.

Now it first appears necessary to avoid attempts at introducing any very radical changes, and to recognize the gradual evolution of Anglo-Saxon institutions at least to the extent of utilizing, as far as possible, such of the existing forms of constitutional machinery as may admit of easy adaptation and growth. Apart from the very important and immediately attainable practice of receiving permanent oversea representatives as members of the Committee of Imperial Defence, it will have been seen from past observations that the Imperial Conference has now reached a position of definite importance as the highest deliberative assembly of the Empire. It is not merely the only official gathering of the heads of the Executive Governments of the self-governing nations, but it meets in definite Sessions. The principle of its continuous existence has, moreover, been recognized by the establishment of the Secretariat to collect information and conduct correspondence

between the Conferences to which attention has already been called, and however inadequate to the importance of the task the present Secretariat may be, its establishment is a recognition of the permanent nature of the Imperial Conference.

The question, therefore, arises as to how far the system and machinery of the Imperial Conference must enter into any scheme designed to give the Dominions a greater share in the control of Imperial affairs.

From the references to past discussions at the Conferences, it has been seen that the matters dealt with have been of a varied description ; but as the Sessions have always been very limited in duration, the treatment of subjects has necessarily been of a somewhat academic and discursive character. The main remedy for this is that the Conference should meet more often, and it should be remembered that the Premier of the most remote of the oversea nations, Mr. Andrew Fisher, laid great stress, more than once, at the 1911 Conference upon the desirability of the Conference meeting more frequently than once in four years, and he himself suggested biennial Conferences. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, with the rapid increase of transport facilities, an annual Session could be arranged, and if sufficient time were given to the deliberations, and some attempt



made to overcome the difficulties connected with its obvious hesitation to commit itself to anything very definite, real progress in the evolution of an Imperial Constitution might be recorded.

It cannot be denied that the Conference has been hampered in its action by two facts: (1) that being unable to decide on matters of importance without unanimous agreement, the different political considerations prevailing in each State have influenced the Premiers against taking decisive action for fear of subsequent political and Parliamentary criticism, and (2) that the Conference has met without the subjects for consideration being thoroughly prepared and threshed out beforehand in readiness for deliberation.

The second difficulty might be to a large extent met by the appointment of Imperial Commissions (working in conjunction with an efficient Intelligence Office), the members of which would be largely composed of experts in particular lines, and would be called upon to present reports on various expert subjects for the consideration of the Conference.

This was a matter to which Sir John Colomb attached, during his later years, considerable importance. In the Memorandum which he was preparing at the time of his death, from which a quotation is made at the head of this chapter,

Sir John wrote : " It would, in my belief, promote real progress towards co-operation were an Imperial Commission appointed, composed of representatives nominated by the several Governments, to take evidence in the Colonies (self-governing) and the United Kingdom, from responsible authorities and departments concerned, and to inquire and report generally on the question of co-operative action both in its main constitutional features as well as in its broad technical aspects. Any Conference with such a Report before it would have something definite to discuss and consider, each member beforehand having had, in consultation with his Government, time to mature his views. . . . I venture to make the suggestion of an Imperial Commission because my observation has led me to think that individual and independent consultation between the Oversea States and the Admiralty and the Colonial Office, and even the Committee of Imperial Defence, without any guiding principles of general application being laid down, does not tend to effective organization and co-ordination of efforts."

But while expert Commissions are essential in certain aspects of the work, it is fairly certain that the timidity of the Conference and its reluctance to embark on any decisive action would only be overcome by the consideration of its sub-

jects beforehand by a body closely associated with, if not actually answerable to, Parliament. No intelligent observer at all acquainted with the oversea countries and their public men can fail to grasp the fundamental fact that the underlying fear of oversea statesmen who meet at the London Conferences is that any action they take, or language they use, may be attacked in Parliament on their return as a surrender of autonomous rights. Some method of associating the oversea Parliaments with the Conference, though only in an indirect and informal way, seems therefore to be indicated, and the following suggestion is put forward entirely on the present writer's individual responsibility.

It is, of course, well known that a large portion of the work of the Parliaments both at home and oversea is carried on by means of Committees, and many matters of public importance are referred to Parliamentary Committees for inquiry and report. The Executive Department presided over by a member of the Cabinet often finds these Committees more useful than Royal Commissions, and sometimes acts upon their Reports without necessarily any formal discussion of them by Parliament as a whole taking place. The precise form is not essential, but the analogy might surely be used in dealing with Empire affairs, for certain



subjects that required consideration and deliberation between the Conferences (e.g., the unification of laws in various directions) might well be referred for report by the Executive Governments to Parliamentary Committees in each Parliament of the Empire. The Committees would, of course, work in touch with each other by correspondence, but in the year of each Conference, and several months before its actual meeting, a delegation from each Parliamentary Committee might meet in London for the joint consideration with a Committee of the Lords and Commons of the subjects dealt with by the various Committees.<sup>1</sup>

By this means matters affecting Dominions in different ways might be harmonized and a useful Report prepared. Such a Report in its final form might then go before the Executive Governments for consideration at the Conference, and though in no sense possessing any binding force, there is no doubt that a joint Report by strong non-party Committees, who are acquainted with political difficulties in the various countries, and who might occasionally be assisted by a few co-opted experts if they thought necessary, would go far

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paper by Mr. L. S. Amery, M.P., read before the Royal Colonial Institute on June 14, 1910, entitled "Some Steps towards an Imperial Constitution."

to encourage the Executive Governments to take more deliberate action in the joint interests of the Empire as a whole.

While the [Parliamentary delegates would have no official relationship to the Imperial Conference, it might perhaps be thought advisable, in connexion with certain matters that came up for deliberation, to invite the Leader of the Opposition in each Parliament to attend a sitting of the Conference so that the unanimous consent of Parliament might be rendered more certain. For this reason it is suggested that the Leader of the Opposition, or Deputy Leader, should always be amongst those forming the Parliamentary delegations, and, of course, the Leader of the Opposition in the home Parliament should be correspondingly invited to serve on the Committee of the Lords and Commons. It might perhaps be objected that great difficulties would occur, on account of distance, in bringing Members of so many Parliaments to the centre of the Empire at the same moment, and that it would be difficult to find a time suitable to all Parliaments. But it should be remembered that a representation of all the oversea Parliaments at the heart of the Empire has already taken place, for at the Coronation of King George V. in 1911, each of the Parliaments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland appointed delegates to repre-

sent them,<sup>1</sup> and on that occasion joint Conferences were held with Members of the home Parliament.

Though the above proposal might materially assist action at the Imperial Conferences, it would not afford representation to the Oversea States in Imperial councils, however likely or unlikely it would be that a regular meeting of Parliamentary representatives would slowly grow to be recognized as a deliberative Assembly in itself, and one not unworthy of a place in the machinery of Empire. But representation, so far as Foreign Policy is concerned, could be, to a far greater extent than at present exists, provided by annual sessions of the

<sup>1</sup> The Representatives of the oversea Parliaments were the Guests of "The Lords and Commons Committee (1911)" as representing the home Parliament. The Parliaments of the Dominions were invited to send Delegates to represent them in the following proportions, i.e. Canada, 18, Australia 18, South Africa 14, New Zealand 8, and Newfoundland 2. It was at this historic gathering that the Empire Parliamentary Association was formed for the purpose of facilitating the exchange of visits and information between the Members of the Empire's Parliaments by a system of Introductions, Hospitality, Parliamentary Privileges, Travel Facilities, Exchange of Information, etc., etc. The Lord Chancellor and the Speaker of the House of Commons are joint-Presidents of the United Kingdom Branch of the Association, while the Speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses are joint-Presidents of Branches in each oversea Parliament except that of Canada, where the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition are Presidents. (See *Parliaments of the Empire* by the present author.)



Imperial Conference, and a definite linking up of the oversea and home Governments between the meetings of the Conferences by the institution of an Imperial Office with an efficient Secretariat and properly organized Intelligence Department. The Imperial Office and Secretariat, etc., would be directly under the control of the Imperial Conference, as suggested by Mr. Deakin in 1907,<sup>1</sup> and wholly dissociated from the Colonial Office, which would be left to deal with the Crown Colonies and Dependencies. The United Kingdom representative to negotiate with the Oversea States through the Imperial Office would be a new Cabinet Minister, the Secretary of State for Imperial Affairs, unless the Prime Minister could undertake the duties himself.

Though a close connexion between the Foreign Secretary and the representatives of the Dominions in the Imperial Office would no doubt be maintained between the Conferences, no effective system could be ensured without the constant presence in London of a member of every oversea Cabinet. In the event of a Minister for External Affairs being appointed by each Dominion to represent his country on the Committee of Imperial Defence (with a system of "reliefs" for Australian and New Zealand Ministers as already suggested), it

<sup>1</sup> See p. 228.

would, without doubt, be found necessary to institute a Committee of Foreign Affairs of which the representatives of the oversea Cabinets would be members. All important questions of Foreign Policy would be discussed by such a Committee, and no step of a far-reaching character would be taken without its approval; and though it is true that while the main cost of defence is provided by the United Kingdom the British Foreign Secretary would be able to exercise authoritative influence in cases of emergency or difference of opinion, there is no doubt whatever that it would be practically impossible for the home Cabinet to enter on a war without the unanimous approval of the Committee, while each member of it would exercise a constant influence upon the course of Foreign Policy. The same Minister of External Affairs would also sit upon the Committee of Imperial Defence, but it is suggested that the two Committees, while closely associated, should be distinct bodies and presided over by different British Ministers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Committee of Imperial Defence at present often varies its Chairman, the Secretary for War presiding one day, for example, the Premier another, and so on; but the Committee of Foreign Affairs would have as its permanent Chairman the British Foreign Secretary. Possibly it appears at first sight that the most convenient course to adopt in

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With regard to the control of oversea forces, representation upon the Committee of Imperial Defence would go far to co-ordinate efforts, but something further than this is required if the policy of establishing Fleet Units is to be continued by the Oversea States. The old idea that the creation of a common authority would lead to a common system of defence has now to be amended by a recognition that the separate defence forces already created can only be combined and co-ordinated for the purpose of war by the institution of a common authority to enable co-operation to be effected. The solution probably lies in making the Board of Admiralty itself more Imperial in the sense of having members upon it nominated by the Oversea States, and in establishing national Navy Boards in each Dominion to act in full co-operation with it. The Admiralty would in that case control the sea-going Fleets, and their technical direction in peace and war, while the Navy Boards would provide men and

establishing a Committee of Foreign Affairs would be to start it as a sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. On account, however, of the importance of its functions and the necessity of providing it with an appropriate status from the commencement, it would be important for the Committee of Foreign Affairs to be a distinct body with its own separate staff.



material, and be responsible for victualling, clothing, coal, stores, ammunition, dockyards, maintenance and repairs.

So far as the writer is aware, this idea was first developed in any detail by Lieut. L. H. Hordern, R.N., in a paper upon "The Naval Defence of Australia,"<sup>1</sup> and Sir John Colomb himself supported the view put forward. Writing to Lieut. Hordern on May 7, 1909, shortly before his fatal illness overtook him, Sir John said: "I have been reading again and considering your paper read at the Imperial Federation League meeting in Australia. I am still more impressed by it, and think your proposal is the best one extant. By and by I intend privately to press Asquith and Haldane to study and consider all you say. It seems a possible key to the solution of the complex and difficult problem."

While decentralization of control of the Navy is obviously impossible in any effective scheme of

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Imperial Federation League of Australia on May 18, 1908. The details of the scheme were more fully worked out by Lieut. Hordern in an able essay entitled "How can the Colonies best help in the Naval Defence of the Empire?" *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, May, 1911. See also *The Framework of Imperial Partnership*, by the same author (London; William Clowes & Sons).

Empire Defence, a certain amount of decentralization of effort in the provision of men and material will almost certainly be found necessary in order to satisfy both the national and maritime aspirations of Oversea States. The matter cannot be more than touched upon here, but in order that there can be no mistake as to Sir John Colomb's attitude regarding centralized control it is useful to recall that when on May 29, 1904, Lord Milner spoke in favour of larger Colonial contributions towards the support of the Fleet, and remarked that when this occurred the Colonies would "demand a voice in the control of the Navy," a meeting of the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, with Sir John Colomb in the Chair, passed a Resolution welcoming Lord Milner's acceptance of the principles for which the Committee had so long contended, viz., that the Unity of the Empire could best be secured by co-operation for the provision and maintenance of a Navy of the Empire. At this meeting, Sir John Colomb moved an amendment, to be added to the Resolution, to the effect that the Committee desired to repeat its conviction that under no circumstances should the control of the Navy of the Empire be decentralized. In acknowledging the Resolution as amended, Lord Milner wrote privately to Sir John Colomb as follows ;—

“JOHANNESBURG,

TRANSVAAL,

July 4, 1904.

“DEAR SIR JOHN COLOMB,—I enclose a formal acknowledgment of the resolution of the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee. In doing so let me thank you for your kind private letter. I need not say that I am in the greatest sympathy with the work of your Committee.

“There is one point, to which I do not wish to refer in my public letter, but which I should like you at any rate to understand. The Resolution seems to indicate that my remarks pointed to a *decentralisation of the control of the Navy*. Nothing is further from my mind. What I was attempting to indicate was the doctrine of the Unity of the Empire, and the absolute equality of right in every portion of it to share in the control of its common forces. Of course that is a distant ideal, as I took care to point out.

“It means equality of contribution, and as, for many years to come, the U. K. will have to bear the greater portion of the burden, there can be no doubt that it will have preponderant control. And even if at any far future date the centre of power shifted and the Imperial Council sat permanently or occasionally elsewhere than in London,



a possibility which I think remote, perhaps improbable, and only contemplate to illustrate the completeness of my Imperialism, which could survive the United Kingdom in course of time being outgrown by the Colonies, it would not mean splitting up the Navy or the control of the Navy. I doubt not that the danger of any such splitting up would be permanently obviated if the idea that the Navy was intended to be the common property of the whole Empire, as much an Australian's or Canadian's, when Australia or Canada really contribute to it, as an Englishman's, were once thoroughly realized. The realization of that idea would do more than anything else to remove the danger of a division of forces and of political separation.

“The one thing which even the most loyal Colonists shy at, and rightly shy at, is the idea of a common Navy being under the exclusive control of a purely British Parliament, subject to the narrow and often pernicious influences of local U. K. politics. A really common Navy, a distant ideal, no doubt, but the ideal best worth working for, inevitably involves the representation of the Colonies in the body ultimately controlling our Navy and Foreign Policy.

“Some day I hope I may have a chance of discussing these matters with you more fully, and

perhaps in making my view more clear. At present my hands are full, but in all I do here I always try to keep the ultimate object of all my local efforts, Imperial Unity, uppermost in my mind and that of others.

Believe me,  
Yours very sincerely,  
MILNER."

It will probably have been made sufficiently apparent that one or two of the suggestions in this chapter are put forward upon the author's individual responsibility, and not with any attempt to label them as the views of Sir John Colomb. From intimate knowledge, however, of Sir John's views, the writer believes that if such views could be pronounced in the light of recent events they would not be found to differ in any material respects from those here adumbrated, and that, at any rate, the great pioneer would accept the principles underlying all the suggestions made as based on his own dictum that "An open real partnership between the Mother-Country and the Colonies, established upon a business basis of reciprocal interests and duties, offers the only possible solution of the difficulties of British Defence." <sup>1</sup>

It may, perhaps, serve some useful purpose

<sup>1</sup> See *British Dangers*, p. 39.

to sum up in brief outline the specific suggestions made in this chapter for the closer association of the oversea sister-countries in the guidance of Imperial affairs. Roughly, then, to meet the needs of the present situation and allow of opportunity of expansion and development, the suggestions are as follows:—

- (a) That the Minister of External Affairs of each Dominion should be resident in London, and that he should be summoned as a member to attend all meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and also of a Committee of Foreign Affairs. In the case of the more remote Dominions, the Minister should alternate with some other member of the oversea Cabinet in order to ensure complete touch being maintained with Colonial opinion.
- (b) That more frequent Meetings of the Imperial Conference should be arranged so that annual or at least biennial Sessions could be held.
- (c) That a system should be established whereby questions to be discussed at the Conference should be considered and threshed out beforehand by bodies in touch with political and Parliamentary opinion in each self-governing country. For this



purpose, certain questions requiring careful consideration between the meetings of the Conference should be referred for report to Imperial Commissions composed of representatives nominated by the several Governments, and also to Parliamentary Committees in the various Parliaments, in much the same way as important public matters at home are now referred to similar Commissions and Committees. A delegation from each Parliamentary Committee would meet before the Conference to agree upon a joint Report respecting the various matters dealt with. Neither the Reports of Committees nor Commissions would bind any members of the Conference, and they could be acted upon or not as might be thought desirable.

- (d) That an Imperial Office be set on foot with an Intelligence Department and Secretariat attached which would work in connexion with and be under the direct control of the Imperial Conference. Such an Imperial Office would be entirely distinct from the Colonial Office, which should be left to deal with the Crown Colonies and Dependencies. The Office would be maintained at the joint expense of the Governments

taking part in the Conference, and, though it would have official representatives of all the Dominions working within it, it would be under the immediate supervision, between the Conferences, either of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, or of a Secretary for Imperial Affairs, who would be a member of the British Cabinet.

- (e) That the Board of Admiralty should be made more distinctively Imperial by the Dominions having power to nominate certain professional members upon it, and that such Board would have entire control of the sea-going Fleets and their technical direction in peace and war, and Navy Boards in each self-governing country would be made responsible for the provision of men and material. While there cannot be decentralization of control, there is necessity for some decentralization in other matters.

Though these suggestions are not in any sense put forward as a final solution, it is believed that their adoption would go far towards establishing a system of joint partnership in accord with oversea national aspirations, and towards providing a basis for the future development of the Imperial Constitution.

It does not require any special prevision to enable a fairly diligent observer of Empire affairs to declare with confidence that the United Kingdom and the self-governing Dominions are now "at the parting of the ways." More than one Oversea State has shown a marked tendency to develop its individual nationality, and if scope be not afforded within the Empire, on lines at once in consonance with the political dignity and the constitutional status of the Oversea Nations, it will inevitably be sought outside. But amid signs from within the Empire which occasion some disquietude, and amid the clash of international rivalries from without, the statesmen of the United Kingdom have received a message of hope and promise from the oldest and greatest of the Dominions oversea. Canadian statesmen have risen to the height of a great conception; it remains for the statesmen of the Home Country to do the same, and offer to those Dominions who are ready to share in the burdens of the Empire a voice in the conduct of its affairs.

No truer words could be written at this day than those penned by Sir John Colomb in the Memorandum he was engaged in writing on his last bed of sickness. "In short, all look for a lead on this great question, and to the Prime Minister of England to give it; filtered opinions through



departmental channels do not satisfy. The desire is to be addressed as States by the head of the Government of the Metropolitan State.”<sup>1</sup>

The next step therefore rests with the statesmen at Home, and now, more than ever, is it necessary that the question of Imperial Representation should be “faced resolutely and solved soon.”<sup>2</sup> If the present momentous epoch is allowed to slip by without effort and without action, the future may indeed, in the words of Canada’s foremost son, “hold to our lips the chalice of vain regret for opportunity neglected and dead.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Extract from Memorandum to which references are made on pp. 168, 197, 246, 247.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Colomb in *British Dangers*, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. R. L. Borden at Dinner of the Empire Parliamentary Association, at the House of Commons, July 16, 1912.

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